

THE MULTICULTURAL CHURCH  
A PARADIGM OF HOLISTIC MINISTRY FOR THE HISPANIC CHURCH  
OF THE SPANISH EASTERN DISTRICT OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD  
IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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To my wife Clarita, the love of my life,  
and my children Daniel, Cristian, and Jazmine.

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I describe the growing trend of Hispanic Protestants migrating to Anglo-Protestant churches specifically throughout the churches of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God. I have chosen a problem-solving methodology called the Pastoral Circle. It involves observing reality or the experience of people and then seeking a solution to their problems in the light of the contributions of the Christian faith and social analysis. I identify the values that should be central to our understanding and reflect theologically and biblically in order to identify the Biblical models that provide the basis for the implementation of a holistic multicultural ministry. I look at the historical patterns of assimilation of the various ethnic groups as seen in America, as well as briefly review the history of Hispanic Protestantism specifically the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God. I also examine some of the factors that contribute to Hispanic Protestant migration to Anglo Protestant Churches. I then propose a pastoral plan which includes defining the qualities needed within the fellowship of Hispanic Protestant clergy to implement a holistic multicultural ministry, as well as present a two-phase model of holistic multicultural ministry that should serve to show new ways for traditional Hispanic Protestant churches to meet the needs of its multicultural congregants. Finally, I present the measures that determine whether the model is effective and successful, as well as celebrate the solution developed by the pastoral circle process in order to reverse the trend seen in Hispanic Protestant churches today.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

### Introduction

There is growing trend showing Hispanic Protestants migrating to English-speaking Anglo Protestant churches. I've observed this trend particularly throughout my own Protestant denomination, Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God.<sup>1</sup> The Spanish Eastern District encompasses the Northeast corridor of the USA, from Tennessee to Maine and from Ohio to the Atlantic. An understanding of the history of growth and development of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God helps us understand the mindset of many of our current pastors and leaders and the reasons why they struggle with reversing the migration trends seen today in our Hispanic churches.

### History of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God

The Spanish Eastern District was birthed as a result of the growth of Hispanic Pentecostalism in America and specifically by the ministry of Juan L. Lugo.<sup>2</sup> Like the movement in Puerto Rico, it was indigenous from the beginning. But like the American movement in the Southwest, it was strongly tied to the General Council in Springfield, despite likewise exercising considerable freedom and autonomy.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this freedom and the economy and support from both the Pentecostal church of God and the

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I for more information on the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God.

<sup>2</sup> Juan L. Lugo, is widely known as the “Apostle of Pentecost” and is credited for introducing the modern Pentecostal experience in PR. Without a doubt a great hero of the faith and highly revered to this very day.

<sup>3</sup> Gaston Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 256.

General Council of the Assemblies of God, along with excellent leadership by Juan Lugo, Frank Finkenbinder,<sup>4</sup> Aberlardo Berrios,<sup>5</sup> Manuel T. Sanchez,<sup>6</sup> Ricardo Tañon,<sup>7</sup> and others, the movement grew very rapidly. In addition, it experienced rapid growth because, unlike Puerto Rico and Mexico in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where the religious marketplace was dominated and highly regulated by the Catholic church. In addition, America was predominantly a protestant country, and in New York City's Spanish-speaking community the Catholic church was in a weakened state and the religious marketplace was completely unregulated.<sup>8</sup> For these reasons many Latino Protestant and Pentecostal churches were opened around the same time the Catholic church began designating Spanish parishes to minister to the thousands of Puerto Ricans and other Latin Americans pouring into New York City. In short, the Catholic church did not have a religious or cultural monopoly over the Latino religious marketplace and found itself in a tight competition with mainline Protestants and especially Pentecostals and other Evangelical groups.<sup>9</sup>

The origins of the Spanish Eastern District began as a result of a wave of growth of Hispanic Pentecostal believers that formed the first Latin American Conference on January 1918 in Kingsville, Texas. They conducted their first election and H.C. Ball would be elected President of the Conference. This conference of Hispanic Pentecostals

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<sup>4</sup> Frank Finkenbinder, an American missionary from New York that arrived in Puerto Rico in March of 1922 and pioneered the work in Arecibo, PR. He helped form the first Pentecostal organization in Puerto Rico of the Assemblies of God.

<sup>5</sup> Abelardo Berrios, pastored the highly influential East Harlem, NY church La Sinagoga, which was founded by Juan Lugo.

<sup>6</sup> Manuel T. Sanchez, the first Superintendent to of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God from 1957-1959.

<sup>7</sup> Ricardo Tañon, pastored the highly influential Bronx, NY church John 3:16. Durin his 34 years of ministry he helped found 17 churches and sent out 54 ministers for the Pentecostal ministry.

<sup>8</sup> Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 256.

<sup>9</sup> Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 256.

would continue to grow and flourish throughout the U.S., Caribbean, and Latin America. In 1925 the Latin American Conference would become the Latin American District of the Assemblies of God and would elect H.C. Ball as their first Superintendent.<sup>10</sup>

However, during the mid 1920's Puerto Rican believers would begin to migrate to the United States. During this time, the majority of Puerto Ricans migrated to the neighborhood of Greenpoint in the borough of Brooklyn, NY. Soon after, the church that was forming in Greenpoint would ask its leaders from the Assemblies of God in Puerto Rico, led by Juan L. Lugo to send them a pastor. Lugo sent Tomas Alvarez to pioneer the work in 1928. On July 22, 1928 the first Hispanic church of the Assemblies of God in the Northeast of the United States was born. This church would serve as a place from which the gospel would be proclaimed throughout Brooklyn, as well as the entire New York Metropolitan Area and various countries throughout Latin America. This church is still alive and well today, "Iglesia Pentecostal Misionera" located on 262 Union Avenue, Brooklyn, NY. To my surprise this was the church I was raised in as a child from 1974 – 1978. I still have many fond memories learning God's word in Sunday School from Pentecostal teachers who taught with great conviction.

In 1937, Finkenbinder and the number of Puerto Rican leaders in New York organized a Spanish-speaking conference within the larger Eastern District of the Assemblies of God. They began pushing for the creation of a new conference organically connected to the Assemblies of God in the United States. This would begin a trend in Latinos seeking to become more closely affiliated with the mother church in the United States rather than Puerto Rico. In 1937 Manuel T. Sanchez would be elected as the president of the Spanish Eastern Conference. After several years of negotiating between

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<sup>10</sup> A Superintendent is the head of an administrative division of a Protestant Church.

Puerto Rican and American leaders in Springfield, Missouri, the Spanish Eastern Convention was organized in 1946 and grew from 11 churches in 1946 to 40 churches and approximately 5,500 members by 1960.<sup>11</sup> In 1957, the Spanish Eastern Convention became the Spanish Eastern District, with Sanchez as its first Superintendent.

One example of the new generation of leaders that emerged in the Spanish Eastern District was Ricardo Tañon (1904-1997). He migrated from Comerio, Puerto Rico, in 1929, and was converted by the street preaching of Eleuterio Paz in Spanish Harlem in 1934. After graduating from the Spanish American Bible Institute in New York in 1938, Tañon ministered for several years before taking over the pastorate of Antonio Caquia's small mission called Christian Church John 3:16 in the South Bronx in 1943. Christian Church John 3:16 was originally founded as a youth ministry connected to Francisco Olazabal's<sup>12</sup> work in the 1930s. It became the center of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God. This church continues to be the place where baptism services are held today by many of our churches throughout the New York Metropolitan Area. This church is especially significant to me because it was the church where my wife and I were baptized in 1980 when we were 12 years old. During Tañon's thirty-four year ministry, he helped found 17 new churches in New York, the Northeast, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Latin America. He also prepared and sent out 54 ministers for the Pentecostal ministry and placed an increasing emphasis on reaching both the spiritual and social needs of Latinos. He sponsored benevolence programs and other

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<sup>11</sup> Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 266.

<sup>12</sup> Francisco Olazabal is considered the most effective Hispanic Pentecostal minister to that time. His work in New York and Chicago led to the establishment of dozens of new churches, as did his campaigns in Los Angeles and Puerto Rico. His emphases on evangelism and healing were combined with concern for the social needs of the Hispanic communities. By the late 1930s, his organization Latin American Council of Churches had 50 churches and an estimated adherence of 50,000 persons. His contributions to the not only Hispanic Christianity but Christianity to the entire continent of North America were immense.

social service ministries targeting the poor, immigrants, and at-risk youth. It is also interesting to note that one of those ministers that were birthed from Tañon's ministry is the distinguished professor of Social Ethics and Ministry Studies, Dr. Eldin Villafaña, who is the founding director of Gordon-Conwell's Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME).

The earlier generations of Latino Pentecostals led the way to a greater openness due a large part to the rise of second-generation Puerto Rican and Latino Assemblies of God leaders who supported a morale movement to balance a deep commitment to Jesus Christ, the church, and the Pentecostal faith with a desire to pursue graduate and doctoral studies at some of the nation's top theological seminaries and universities in order to have a voice and agency in the church, the academy, and society.<sup>13</sup> Yet despite the relatively high level of education that some achieved, the average Pentecostal parishioner in New York had only a sixth grade level of education. Assemblies of God members placed a tremendous emphasis on holy living, which was defined by external observances and practices. They believed that abstaining from drinking, divorce, smoking, dancing, short hair on women, tight clothes, and any other activities would help them adhere to their holiness standards. This legalistic mindset would continue to impact Hispanic Pentecostals for generations to come.

Spanish Eastern District superintendents Alejandro Perez, Vicente Ortiz, Ralph Williams, Augusto Castillo, and Adolfo Carrion not only developed the work of Manuel T. Sanchez and Ricardo Tañon, but also encouraged and promoted this balance of faith and education.<sup>14</sup> The Spanish Eastern District grew quickly under its leaders, but

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<sup>13</sup> Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 275.

<sup>14</sup> Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 275.

especially under that of Adolfo Carrion and Raphael Reyes II. Adolfo Carrion was born in Juncos, Puerto Rico, in 1934 and raised Roman Catholic. He migrated to New York City in 1950 and was converted by the preaching of a small group of Evangelicals from the Sea of Galilee Church located in the lower east side of Manhattan, NY in 1951. Not long afterward, he went into the Spanish Eastern Convention ministry and became a senior pastor 1960. He married Elisa Diaz and they had four children. After being elected Assistant Superintendent, he was elected Superintendent of the Spanish Eastern District in 1966 and served in that capacity until 1998.

Under Carrion's leadership, the Spanish Eastern District became one of the largest in the Assemblies of God. He placed tremendous emphasis on church planting and spreading the Christian message, especially in new Latino immigrant communities from New England to Miami, Florida. He realized that the most effective means to expand Hispanic ministry was to create new churches and districts. As a result, he helped create, form, and release a Puerto Rican Assemblies of God District in 1976. In 1974, he began laying the foundations for the formation of a new district in the south and in 1980 organized the Southeastern Spanish District based in Florida. He also strengthened the infrastructure of the Spanish Eastern District, organized new churches, and secured new district resources. He further developed the Bible school in New York, opened a Hispanic seminary of the East, and created correspondence programs for ministers who could not relocate. A strong supporter of missions, he raised funds to send missionaries throughout the Caribbean and Central America, and around the world. In addition, one of the ways he spread the Christian message was through an evangelistic radio station called Radio Vision Cristiana.

After Carrion retired in 1998, Rafael Reyes II became Superintendent and he would serve in that capacity for the next 15 years. He continued the innovative work of Carrion and especially the need to create a bilingual church. Reyes's vision was driven by what the Assemblies of God calls the four cardinal doctrines (salvation, Divine healing, Spirit baptism, and Christ's second coming) and the four reasons for Assemblies of God's existence (evangelism, worship, discipleship, and acts of compassion). He argued that addressing these issues would help them meet the Spanish Eastern District's goal of evangelizing the world, develop ministries, planting churches, and bringing about positive social change to prepare people for Christ's second coming. Under Reyes's leadership, the Spanish Eastern District sent top evangelists and ministers to pioneer the work among Latinos up and down the east coast from Boston to Florida. Under his leadership the Spanish Eastern District continued to grow to a fellowship that now has approximately 450 churches and over 1,000 ministers.<sup>15</sup> Today, the Spanish Eastern District is led by Superintendent Manuel A. Alvarez. He was elected in 2013 to continue to build on the legacy of those that preceded him. His passion for engaging the next generation has given our fellowship the hope needed to embrace the future with great expectancy. Currently the Spanish Eastern District has 458 churches with 1,050 ministers and approximately 55,000 parishioners.

In 2013 I was elected as the General Presbyter<sup>16</sup> of our District replacing our former General Presbyter Manuel A. Alvarez, our current Superintendent. As a member of our District Presbytery, we've had many conversations that have expressed a great concern regarding the future of our Hispanic congregations. Many have shared their

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<sup>15</sup> Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 277.

<sup>16</sup> General Presbyters are elected to serve as members of the District Presbytery and represent their respective Districts on the National General Council Presbytery of the Assemblies of God.

concerns with the following question: Will the Hispanic Protestant Church remain relevant in the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? At a first glance this would seem impossible given the statistics shown by the Pew Hispanic Center<sup>17</sup> and the American Community Survey,<sup>18</sup> which shows the increase in Hispanic migration to the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, even in surveys conducted in 1993 confirmed the following:<sup>19</sup>

- (1) More than half of all Hispanics in the USA are bilingual or prefer English as their first language. These are predominantly the second-generation of native-born U.S. citizens who have been educated in the public or private school systems in the U.S.; this would also apply to the third, fourth, etc., generations of Hispanics in the U.S.
- (2) More than half of all Hispanics who are active in Protestant churches in the U.S. attend predominantly English-speaking Anglo congregations.
- (3) The other 50% of active Hispanic Protestants attend predominantly Spanish-speaking or bilingual churches, either autonomous Hispanic congregations or Hispanic Departments in Anglo, Black or Korean churches.

Undoubtedly, Hispanics today migrate to the U.S. in search of a better future for themselves and their families, which they feel their native country could not offer. Generally speaking, they believe that the United States is the land of opportunity. They understand that in the process of seeking a better way of life they will have to sacrifice

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<sup>17</sup> The Pew Hispanic Center is a project of the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan “fact tank” that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It is supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts. More information is available at <http://pewhispanic.org/>.

<sup>18</sup> The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing statistical survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS is the largest household survey in the U.S. with a sample of about 3 million

<sup>19</sup> Clifton Holland, “A report on the Hispanic protestant church growth study of 1993,” *Latin American Socio-Religious Studies* (May 1998), accessed October 22, 2016, [http://www.hispanicchurchcesusa.net/national\\_hisp\\_study\\_93.htm](http://www.hispanicchurchcesusa.net/national_hisp_study_93.htm).

many of the very things that define who they are. This behavior appears to represent the mentality of many Hispanic Protestants as they migrate to English-speaking Protestant churches. As new generations of Hispanics grow up speaking English, and become more Americanized than their parents, they are turning to English-speaking congregations to meet their needs.

The challenges that we face today as Hispanic pastors is unprecedented due to the changes in the landscape of Hispanic churches. Hispanics are a blend of cultures and as such their churches are composed of a wide array of cultures and generations that transcend our understanding of each and the training needed to meet their growing need. In our local church I have seen first hand the challenges to minister to the various needs of a growing, thriving, and healthy congregation. I've spoken to many pastors over the years and all have expressed their concerns regarding the loss of second and third generation Hispanics from their congregations. The need to develop a holistic approach to ministry that helps address the needs of our Hispanic congregations in order to reverse the trend of migration away from Hispanic congregations and ensure our relevance in society for generations to come is quite evident.

Our Hispanic congregations today are multi-generational (up to four generations in some cases), multicultural, and bilingual. This presents a great challenge for an aging group of pastors who are unwilling, and in some cases unable to change their model of ministry, and a younger group of pastors who are ready for change but unprepared to accommodate for the growing needs of the congregations they pastor. Many congregants, especially those of the second and third generation have expressed their frustrations with

our acceptance of the dominant culture which they feel inevitably must be embraced in order to survive.

In order to address these needs it would be necessary for us to understand why this is happening before we can explore some possible solutions. An analysis must be conducted in order to identify these causes as observed in society. In particular, we must look at the historical patterns of assimilation of the various ethnic groups as seen in America, as well as briefly review the history of Hispanic Protestantism in America. Historically, many ethnic groups in the U.S. eventually assimilate into American culture. An understanding of our history provides the reasons explaining who we are, why we do the things we do, and prevents us from repeating the same mistakes. We must examine the needs of second and third generation Latinos who desire to belong to a church that is more holistic in their approach to ministry. Their cultural concerns tie into their linguistic needs of their children that struggle in an environment that speaks exclusively in the language of the first generation, Spanish. The pattern of decline of the ancestral tongue of most ethnic groups in America among the second and third generations has greatly contributed to their migration. In addition they express administrative concerns over the lack of organization in some of our Hispanic Protestant churches. The perception of financial mismanagement is consistent with the lack of trust they have in the administration perhaps due to their experiences from their native country. The notion that the English-speaking churches have better programs to meet their families needs, whether real or simply perception must be noted, as well as their desire to belong to churches that are making an impact in the world. Finally, their concern for the relevant biblical preaching and teaching that meets their needs. Many have expressed their

concerns over a legalistic Christian theology that permeates Hispanic churches which believes that salvation demands or even depends upon total obedience to the letter of the law. Legalism places the law above the gospel of grace by establishing requirements for salvation beyond repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and reducing the general precepts of the Bible to narrow and rigid moral codes specifically that which relates to the outer appearance of the person.<sup>20</sup> Some would even consider this to be more likely a determining factor than offering ministry in English.

Secondly, we must identify the values that should be central to our understanding and reaction to the issue that is being analyzed. We must reflect theologically and biblically in order to answer the following question, is there a biblical/theological foundation for a model of multicultural ministry? In our faith tradition of the Assemblies of God the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are accepted as verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to men and women, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct. Evangelical pastors and lay leaders will be encouraged to implement a holistic multicultural model of ministry as they grasp the biblical teaching on this subject as found in Scripture. Upon a careful examination of the Biblical text we will also discover the Biblical models for this multicultural ministry. This will provide the necessary insight that will calm the fear of the unknown of many Hispanic pastors and congregations who are afraid to embrace the wisdom of a multicultural ministry.

Although God's plan for the salvation of all people seemed new to the early Church, it was part of God's plan from the start. From the beginning God chose Abraham

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<sup>20</sup> *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*. Manser, M. H., managing ed. London: Martin Manser, 2009. As found in the Logos Bible study software program.

so that through him all the families of the world would be blessed. The early Church experienced Pentecost as they fulfilled Jesus' great commission to the nations. On Pentecost, God supplied a diversity of languages. Jewish people from many nations recognized many of the local languages being spoken. It is interesting to note that in Genesis 11, God scattered these peoples at the tower of Babel by confusing their tongue, but at Pentecost he unites people through this diversity of language. Through this diversity of language, God brings together a church united among many cultures, foreshadowing the rest of His plan in Acts. On the church's first Pentecost, God began fulfilling His end-time promise of inspiring His people to speak for Him. Acts 2:17–18 states that, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy; your young men will see visions; your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

Jerusalem was almost exclusively Jewish, so we cannot expect its churches to have become multicultural. But the situation was different in Antioch, which was very cosmopolitan. There Jews, Greeks, Syrians, and other groups constituted minorities, and there the scattered Hellenist Christians caught the Spirit's vision for evangelizing Gentiles of which the Apostle Paul was assigned to reach and teach. As we fulfill the great commission we fulfill God's purpose to reach the nations with the message of the Gospel. The early Church's experience of Pentecost is the force behind the theology of inclusiveness. The Pentecostal faith is synonymous with a faith that should encourage diversity. Today, as we seek to transcend these differences in our Hispanic churches, we

must do so by providing our churches some options that will assist us as we shift towards multiculturalism and become a more diverse congregation.

Third, we must analyze this migration trend from a social perspective. We'll look at the historical patterns of assimilation of the various ethnic groups as seen in America, as well as briefly review the history of Hispanic Protestantism in America. Historically, many ethnic groups in the U.S. eventually assimilate into American culture or create a new culture. An understanding of our history provides the reasons explaining who we are, why we do the things we do, and prevents us from repeating the same mistakes. In addition, I also examine some of the factors that contribute to Hispanic Protestant migration. I examine the pattern of decline of the ancestral tongue of most ethnic groups in America among the third and subsequent generations and the lack of pastoral training of Hispanic Clergy to meet the needs of second and third generation Latinos.

Fourth, we then must develop an action plan to implement in order to reverse the trend. We must answer the simple question, "What are we to do?" A response is the only logical conclusion left after having contacted, analyzed and reflected upon the issues in question. We will propose a pastoral plan which includes defining the qualities needed within the fellowship of Hispanic Protestant clergy to implement a holistic multicultural ministry, as well as present a model of holistic multicultural ministry that should serve to show new ways for traditional Hispanic Protestant churches to meet the needs of its multicultural congregants.

Finally, after having identified the problem, analyzing why the problem exists, reflecting upon the Scriptures as a source of wisdom to address the problem and implementing our pastoral solution, we now arrive at how to determine if what we have

implemented actually works. We must ask ourselves, “How do we know it’s working?”

I intend to provide the measures that determine whether the model is effective and successful, as well as celebrate the solution developed by the pastoral circle process. The evaluation stage determines the necessary adjustments to be made as we continue to develop the vision of holistic multicultural ministry.

Using this methodology we will survey Hispanic congregations from the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God. This will allow us to examine the current exodus of Hispanic Protestants to Anglo congregations and develop strategies to help Hispanic congregations reverse the trend. My contention is that if Hispanic Protestant churches are to survive they will need to lead their congregations to a model of church life that is home as much for the immigrant who speaks no English, as for the acculturated Hispanic who barely speaks Spanish but still prefers the latin flavor and culture in their church life. By expanding their efforts to reaching Hispanics of every generation they position themselves for growth for many years to come. This trend is troublesome because history has taught us that Hispanic Americans who joined English-speaking Protestant churches frequently found themselves marginalized within the very institutions designed to minister to them.<sup>21</sup>

In 25 years of ministry experience I’ve learned that ministry is not just about growth but also more importantly about health. Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Church in California, wrote a book titled *The Purpose Driven Church*, in his book he establishes that a “Great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Barton, “Inter-ethnic Relations Between Mexican Americans and Anglo American Methodists in the U.S. Southwest, 1836-1938,” in *Protestantes/Protestants*, ed. David Maldonado Jr. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1999), 62.

Commission will make a Great Church.”<sup>22</sup> He proposes that there are basically five movements or principles that help determine the health of any church. As we consider Jesus’ teaching of the Great Commandment, a healthy church is one that is committed to growing stronger through Worship. Ultimately, the church exists to worship God. As a church we must remember that our commitment to Christ is priority number one. Are we growing closer in relationship to God? Does this provide an opportunity to enjoy expressing our love to God? Throughout Scripture we’re commanded to celebrate God’s presence by magnifying the Lord and exalting His name. Second, a healthy church is committed to growing broader through Ministry. The gospel teaches us to “love our neighbor as we love ourselves.”<sup>23</sup> The church exists to minister to people. Ministry is demonstrating God’s love to others by meeting their needs and healing their hurts. Are we effectively providing pastoral care for those attending? Third, a healthy church is committed to fulfilling the Great Commission.<sup>24</sup> The Great Commission includes three tasks that Christ ordained for his church to accomplish. Christian ministry must be committed to growing larger through Evangelism. The church exists to communicate God’s love through his word.<sup>25</sup> We are ambassadors for Christ and as such our mission is to evangelize the world. Does the implementation of this model of ministry encourage and inspire us to reach our community? The Great Commission calls for us to go, simply put, are we going? Fourth, a healthy church is committed to growing deeper through Discipleship.<sup>26</sup> Are we fulfilling our mission to make disciples for Christ? Discipleship

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<sup>22</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), 102.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 22:39 (ESV). All Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>24</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 104.

<sup>26</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 106.

is the process of helping people become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions.<sup>27</sup> It is the Church's responsibility to guide people towards spiritual maturity. Finally, does the fellowship support the vision of multiculturalism? Congregational support is necessary for any ministry to succeed. Service attendance is a key indicator to gauge the support of the fellowship. Ultimately, does the implementation of a holistic multicultural ministry promote unity in the local congregation? In addition, we must examine whether or not we possess sufficient human and financial resources necessary for realizing this ministry strategy, as well as establish a timetable for meeting the objectives of the pastoral plan. These principles provide the basis for an evaluation of the effectiveness and progress of the holistic multicultural ministry that I propose.

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<sup>27</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 106.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

As I begin a brief theological reflection on multicultural ministry, my intentions with this chapter are to provide the Biblical foundations, from an Evangelical perspective, that support a ministry that is culturally and linguistically more inclusive. Our Evangelical faith tradition uses Scripture as the foundation for any decision made regarding the development of the ministry. In order for the Hispanic Protestant Church to survive the exodus outlined in the previous chapter, it will need to embrace a multicultural theology of ministry that meets the needs of second and third generation Latinos. Upon a careful examination of the Biblical text we will also discover some Biblical models for this multicultural ministry. This should provide the necessary insight that will calm the fear of the unknown of many pastors and congregations who are afraid to embrace the wisdom of a multicultural ministry.

#### **Old Testament Theology**

From the very beginning the Scriptures always expressed that God's intention was to reveal His purposes to reach a people he would call to serve him, Israel and through Israel reach all peoples.<sup>1</sup> Clearly throughout the scriptures there is sufficient evidence of a God who desires to reach every nation, every generation, and every tongue as we will see upon an examination of various texts throughout the Old and New Testaments. In similar fashion, Hispanic congregations are composed of a blend of people from different generations, cultures, and languages, all mixed to form a church that God created. The

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12; Isaiah 42.

first glimpse of this is found in the story of Abraham. The scriptures clearly show that God called Abraham out of the ancient city Ur of the Chaldeans, and promised to make him the father of many nations and not only the nation of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

God called Abraham out from among all the other nations who worshiped pagan gods. The nation of Israel was called to worship the one God alone and they were commanded to teach others to do the same. Through His covenant with Israel, God's original purpose was to show His nature and character to all nations.<sup>3</sup> God wanted to use Israel as the example to all nations. This shows us that from creation God always desired to be the God of all nations and cultures. He gave Israel a multicultural mission, which was to bring the other nations into our covenant.

Isaiah understood God's heart for diversity as well. The Old Testament prophets also declared a multicultural word: "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles."<sup>4</sup> "And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord . . . these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."<sup>5</sup> God wasn't merely suggesting this multicultural vision to Israel; He was giving them a divine command. Israel was entrusted a missionary task to be the light of the world. This missionary task includes bringing the nations in to their covenant and sharing God's love with them through generosity and through God's revelation of His mercy and faithfulness. If they

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 12:3.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 34:6.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 42:6.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 56:6,7.

embraced their faith and repented of their pagan ways they would be welcomed and accepted into the family of God. However, the Israelites felt smug and comfortable in their election though God made it clear that their privileged election was granted and not earned. They seemed to forget that their election wasn't because they were special, but instead they were special because they were elected. They disregarded God's commandments for love and justice, and instead chose to dwell safely and securely in their comfort zone.<sup>6</sup> The Israelites seemed to forget that Abraham was from modern-day Iraq, Moses was married to an African woman, and Ruth was a pagan Moabitess, which even makes the Messiah's genealogy multicultural. They forgot their own heritage was culturally diverse, and ironically, ruled others out of God's blessings for the all the nations. They became prideful and arrogant in their ability to keep God's law.<sup>7</sup> They completely misunderstood the reason why God had set them apart from other nations; they lost their multicultural command to be a light to the nations. As a result, their ethnocentric pride led them to self-implode their divine mission. The Israelites self-elevated their history, culture, traditions, and strict religious practices by ignoring God's multicultural vision for the nations. Many of our Hispanic congregations mirror the same mindset of Israel in refusing to meet the needs of those that are culturally and linguistically different. Even the psalmist declared that God's kingdom and dominion endures throughout all generations and if so then the ministry must reflect a theology that is consistent with a God that is Lord of all.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly the multicultural debate finds validity in the scriptures of the Old Testament. The texts embrace diversity as a key component of God's ultimate plan and

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<sup>6</sup> Micah 6:8.

<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 26:5-10.

<sup>8</sup> Psalms 146:13.

purpose for the nations. Beyond that dimension there are centrifugal forces at work that drive mankind into the cultivation of cultural diversity. It is the people of God, arrayed in diversity, that multiculturalism finds validity. Resulting from this point, it must be underscored that monoculturalism is an unusual view of reality and finds no support in Old Testament theology.

### **New Testament Theology**

In his provocative and prophetic book *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World*, Orlando E. Costas reminds Latinos and others that the gospel is the fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic hope. It is the good news that God, through the death, burial and resurrection of his only begotten Son, freely offers renewal by the Holy Spirit and reconciliation with himself to all who approach him by placing their faith in and surrendering control of their lives to Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to the arrogance of the nation of Israel, Jesus lived out the Old Testament theology of welcome very powerfully and radically. Although he shocked the establishment and was considered by many in his time as controversial, He was true to his convictions because He embraced everyone he came in contact with. He was extremely welcoming to every repentant sinner into His kingdom because he embraced a multicultural, and sinful world. Jesus' ministry represents the mindset of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Latino who is trying to bridge the gap between the 1<sup>st</sup> generation and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Latinos. He welcomed Gentiles and sinners because he claimed to do only

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<sup>9</sup> Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1974), 64.

what He saw His Father doing in order to fulfill the Law and the prophets, and challenged the Pharisees to be transformed in their way of thinking. Their mindset clearly shifted from their original purpose and calling. However, Jesus' teaching confronted this reality and re-introduced a theology of inclusivity throughout his ministry.

In the high priestly prayer of John 17, Jesus prays: "And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."<sup>10</sup> Jesus' prayer is for us to experience the same acceptance, love and friendship that Jesus shares with God the Father. The unity that Jesus prays for is not uniformity, both one that is in spirit and of love, and an oneness of mission. If we are to live and practice the unity that Jesus prayed for us, we need to talk about friendship. We can view friendship as a direct manifestation of our call to be people of blessing. Friendship with each other and with God is the direct way we convey how much we value, appreciate and respect each other. Jesus even tells his disciples that he no longer calls them servants, but instead friends. For us to be friends with God is to share God's concern for people. It is to share God's purpose and salvation to all God's children. To be a friend of God is to love the people God loves. Jesus' prayer in John 17 concludes with Jesus' appeal that we were his disciples if we witness our faith to the whole world by means of our unity. Proclaiming if the church has any hope of sharing the faith with those in the world who do not believe we must learn to be friends with each other before our friendship to the world will be credible. Friendship and unity means to love those whom God loves.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John 17:11.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen A. Rhodes, *Where the Nations meet: The Church in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 54.

Matthew's Gospel provides another insight about God's desire for all the nations. Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, which includes Ruth and Bathsheba, two gentile women. The narratives found in the gospels tell us that Jesus settled in an area once associated with Gentiles whom clearly spoke in at least two languages, Greek and Aramaic.<sup>12</sup> He healed a centurion's servant, and even announced that God would include in His people many from the east and the west.<sup>13</sup> Jesus declared "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me"<sup>14</sup> clearly indicates His call to the church to be socially engaged and culturally inclusive and welcoming. Multicultural congregations embrace this call by exercising ministries of evangelism and social justice with both piety and mercy.

Later, at Jesus' crucifixion it was the Gentiles (Roman soldiers) who first recognized Jesus' identity at the cross.<sup>15</sup> Matthew's Gospel climaxes with Jesus' commission to make disciples of all nations, sharing in fulfilling the promise that all nations would hear.<sup>16</sup> By clarifying God's heart already present in the Old Testament, Jesus prepared the way for the Gentile mission in Acts, which in turn points toward the goal of Christ's diverse church from all peoples.

### **Acts of the Apostles**

Perhaps the clearest example of God fulfilling His mandate to reach the nations of all languages is found on the church's first Pentecost. God began fulfilling the prophet Joel's end-time promise of pouring God's spirit on all flesh with no exceptions. "In the

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 4:15.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 8:5-13.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 25:35.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 27:54.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 28:19,20.

last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions; your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”<sup>17</sup> This outpouring would empower His people to speak for Him, and interestingly did so initially in other people’s languages.<sup>18</sup> The Jewish feast of Pentecost (50 days after the Feast of Passover) brought together Jews who were from Palestine as well as Jews born outside of Palestine. Those from outside Palestine were those who over the years were scattered or in *Diaspora* to different parts of the world such as North Africa, Asia and Europe. It was these Jews and others who had decided to follow the Jewish religion that heard the disciples speaking in their languages.<sup>19</sup> The sign of God’s people glorifying His name in other languages was a specific sign that the Spirit of God was empowering His people to fulfill His multicultural purpose. Perplexed by all of this, they explained it away by jumping to conclusions that the disciples must have been drunk. Peter, empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit, seized the opportunity, explaining that it was too early to get drunk. He preached a powerful message that drew the audience to ask the question “what shall we do?” The result was the conversion of about 3,000 people. In essence, the implication of the Church’s beginning on the day of Pentecost was that God was signifying that His Church was going to be culturally diverse. The Spirit has empowered the church to bridge all cultures, races, generations and ethnic groups with the gospel. In Genesis 11 we read of God scattering the people at the tower of Babel by confusing their tongues because of their rebelliousness, but at Pentecost, in contrast, God again supplies a diversity of languages to unite humanity.

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<sup>17</sup> Acts 2:17-18.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 2:4-6.

<sup>19</sup> Acts 2:5-12.

Through this new gift of tongues, God would bring together a church among many cultures, thus foreshadowing the rest of His plan in Acts.

However, much of the church in Jerusalem was slow to accept God's plan. In Jerusalem, the church was exclusively Jewish, so we cannot expect its churches to have become multicultural. Because they were already familiar with the various cultures, they had some sensitivity to the dynamics of multicultural ministry. One of the Hellenist preachers, who also served as a deacon of the church and pioneered the church's mission in Samaria was named Phillip. Like Stephen, Phillip was a Hellenistic Jew who was raised among the gentiles, who spoke Greek and Aramaic, which was the language of the apostles, and chosen to serve as a deacon in order to assist the Apostles in meeting the needs of the community.<sup>20</sup> This would have given him a unique understanding of both Jewish and Hellenistic cultures, which qualified him to break any cultural barriers that existed between the two. When he broke new ground and as soon as the apostles from Jerusalem arrived and saw that the work was from the Lord, they embraced the ministry in Samaria. After the revival in Samaria, God instructed Philip to meet an important court official from Ethiopia.<sup>21</sup> In Acts 8 Luke tells us that Philip was told by an angel to go to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza, and there he met the Ethiopian eunuch. He had been to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home. The eunuch was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah, and had come to Isaiah 53:7-8. Philip asked the Ethiopian, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I understand unless I have a teacher to teach me?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and began to share the good news about Jesus. Immediately the Ethiopian was baptized and

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<sup>20</sup> Acts 6:1, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Acts 8:26-39.

the rest is history. Eusebius of Caesarea, the first church historian, in his "Ecclesiastical History," tells of how the eunuch returned to diffuse the Christian teachings in his native land shortly after the Resurrection and prior to the arrival of the Apostle Matthew.<sup>22</sup> Clearly, Phillip the Hellenist Jew reminds us of a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation believer who is instrumental to spreading the Gospel message to other cultures and languages. In many ways Phillip represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of believers that serve as the bridge to reaching the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of believers represented by the Ethiopian Eunuch who are different culturally and linguistically.

Embracing uncircumcised Gentiles would soon cause some controversy. However, God would later send Peter to Cornelius, an officer in the Roman army that occupied Judea. Jesus' instructions about being witnesses to the ends of the earth transformed Peter dramatically after the vision he had when he heard a voice tell him three times, "What God has cleansed you must not call common".<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, Peter recognized that God had accepted the gentiles mainly because he witnessed the outpouring of the Spirit on Cornelius' household.<sup>24</sup> This reflects the difficulty that some first generation believers have in breaking from cultural limitations and traditions even after receiving a vision from God. However, the Jerusalem church would soon acknowledge that God was also welcoming Gentiles after Peters' witness recounting the multiple confirmations of God's plan did the Jerusalem church acknowledge that God was also welcoming Gentiles.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Brendan Pringle, "Ethiopia: The first Christian nation?", *International Business Times* (March 2013), accessed on February 20, 2017, <http://www.ibtimes.com/ethiopia-first-christian-nationn-1110400>.

<sup>23</sup> Acts 10:28,29.

<sup>24</sup> Acts 10:44-48.

<sup>25</sup> Acts 11:18.

God's acceptance of a small group of Gentile converts caused the Jerusalem church little concern as long as they remained a small group, as long as they could be viewed as exceptions. With increasing reports of large numbers of gentile converts, Jewish believers grew concerned. Jewish teaching insisted that Gentile converts to Judaism be circumcised. It made Jesus' followers in Jerusalem look back to their cultural peers if they failed to insist on the same requirement. Facing continuing oppression from Gentiles, a mad emperor who tried to defile the temple, and the brief reign of a Jewish king who stirred nationalistic fervor, Jerusalem grew more conservative during the middle of the first century. The church in most cultures mirrors its society both positively and negatively, and the Jerusalem church was no exception. Some even began insisting on circumcising Gentile converts.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the church debated again whether to fully welcome Gentiles as Gentiles without requiring them to give up their own culture.

At Antioch the situation was very different because it was very cosmopolitan. There Jews, Greeks, Syrians, and other groups including the scattered Hellenist Christians caught the Spirit's vision for evangelizing Gentiles of which the Apostle Paul was assigned to reach and teach.<sup>27</sup> As the Antioch church became multicultural, it established a diverse leadership team that could be sensitive to the needs of all the groups represented in the church. Saul was born in Tarsus but grew up in Jerusalem. His education and connections reveal that he came from a family of status. Acts 13:1 tells us, "In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas (a Levite from Cyprus), Simeon (scholars suggest that he was from North Africa)<sup>28</sup> called Niger, Lucius

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<sup>26</sup> Acts 15:1-5.

<sup>27</sup> Acts 11:19-21.

<sup>28</sup> M. Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers 1991), Vol. 6.

of Cyrene (a North African city), Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.”

The church in Antioch embraced a vision for building a multicultural church not only in Antioch, but also throughout the world. At Antioch Paul and Barnabas were sent forth through the leading of the Spirit, to evangelize Cyprus and southern Asia Minor.<sup>29</sup> On his next journey, when Paul left Troas for Philippi, the Greeks and Romans viewed him as bringing more than an Asian or a Semitic message into Europe as a sign that God was continuing to bring His universal message to all nations. However, nationalism continued to increase in Jerusalem and increased the tension between the church in Jerusalem and the other younger churches outside the Jerusalem. Paul intended his last visit to Jerusalem to be a peaceful visit and brought representatives of the diaspora who consisted of mixed Jewish-Gentile Christians, along with an offering for Christians who were impoverished in Jerusalem. He soon learned that many believers in Jerusalem had accepted false rumors about him. Some suggested that if Paul respected the Gentiles’ culture he must reject Jewish culture.<sup>30</sup> Paul agreed to demonstrate his identification with his own Jewish culture as a way to dismiss these false rumors.<sup>31</sup>

In the midst of Paul’s ministry of reconciliation, however, some who opposed his mission to the Gentiles attacked him.<sup>32</sup> Paul talked about his call to reach the Gentiles and this instantly infuriated his audience.<sup>33</sup> He taught that a true member of God’s church embraces all those that accept the gospel message. His gospel message was one of inclusivity and not exclusivity.

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<sup>29</sup> Acts 13:2,4.

<sup>30</sup> Acts 21:21.

<sup>31</sup> Acts 21:23-26.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 21:27-29.

<sup>33</sup> Acts 22:22.

A united church of Jews and Gentiles would have been difficult to achieve. The church in Jerusalem was focused on reaching its own culture, a strategy that would lead to result in its destruction only a few years later. Their suspicion of the Gentile mission was extremely shortsighted. The new churches of the diaspora would be the tool that God would use to take His message to the nations. The very nature of the gospel is one that is inclusive and any faith community that fails to acknowledge this truth runs the risk of experiencing the same decline as the church in Jerusalem. Spanish dominant churches that only focus on reaching Hispanics of the first generation run the risk of losing the second and third generation, a historical fact that repeats itself time and time again.

### **Pauline Theology**

Jesus fully revealed this Kingdom culture to Paul.<sup>34</sup> Paul saw Jesus as the measure of what is true and good. His kingdom is the standard of all cultural values, beliefs, and characteristics. Paul said, “For the kingdom of God is … righteousness and peace and joy.”<sup>35</sup> The very nature of the kingdom of God transforms, affirms, and encompasses every culture it embraces. We can enjoy God’s handiwork in cultures other than our own as we acknowledge that no one culture embodies the whole truth.

Paul tried to teach the Christians of Rome this truth: We can learn from other unique cultures as we encounter the Lord of all cultures. However, bringing together different cultures into one body is no easy task, as we see in the church in Rome.<sup>36</sup> The huge culture clash Paul faced among the Jewish and Gentile Christians of Rome are

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<sup>34</sup> Galatians 1:16.

<sup>35</sup> Romans 14:17.

<sup>36</sup> Romans 15:8-13.

examples of multicultural challenges in the church.<sup>37</sup> Paul clearly addressed these challenges in his letter to the church.

Paul's letter to the saints in Rome addressed an ethnically divided church. He addressed a church that from his viewpoint, were part of the metropolitan center of the world.<sup>38</sup> Rome was the largest urban city of its time. At this time, the Jews made up a substantial number in Rome. Their synagogues, frequented by many, enabled the Gentiles to become acquainted with the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Consequently, a church composed of both Jews and Gentiles was formed at Rome. Some years earlier, the emperor Claudius had expelled Jewish people from Rome as we see in the story of Aquila and Priscilla.<sup>39</sup> However, their expulsion from Rome and the emperor's death in 54 AD would provide the opportunity for the Jewish Christians to return to join the Gentile Christians in Rome, which would create a multicultural church in Rome. Many of which would serve, in all likelihood, as leaders of the church in Rome and would meet with Paul in his last visit to Rome.<sup>40</sup> The differences between Jewish and Gentile congregations created cultural conflicts with different practices and values that now had to coexist. Paul knew that addressing the issue of cultural diversity with saints in Rome would be significant for establishing a vision for evangelizing the nations in the hearts and minds of the early Church. Paul reminded them that their unity in the gospel should transcend their differences.<sup>41</sup> He established that both Jews and Gentiles are sinners

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<sup>37</sup> Romans 15:8-13.

<sup>38</sup> Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, The Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 78.

<sup>39</sup> Acts 18:1-2.

<sup>40</sup> Acts 28:17.

<sup>41</sup> Romans 1:16; 10:12,13.

under God's judgment.<sup>42</sup> But if all of us are equally lost, then all of us must be saved only on the same terms and that is through faith in Christ.

Many Jewish people believed that they were saved simply because they were children of Abraham. Some even believed they were the saved people because of their covenant of circumcision. Yet, Paul reminded Jewish believers that as ethnic descendants of Abraham their salvation wasn't automatically earned.<sup>43</sup> He reminded them that all are descendants from Adam.<sup>44</sup> Jewish believers looked to their possession of the Law as a sign of superiority over Gentiles, but Paul taught that even though the Law could teach right from wrong, it had no power to make anyone holy or righteous.<sup>45</sup>

The Jewish people had special privileges, but these did not guarantee salvation.<sup>46</sup> Ethnic descent from Abraham did not guarantee participation in God's covenant. Jewish people emphasized their "chosenness" in Abraham; yet, regarding salvation, God could choose without regard to ethnicity based instead on faith in Christ.<sup>47</sup> The gospel that reconciles us to God also reconciles us to one another.

However, the problem in Rome was not just Jewish believers looking down on Gentiles. Paul warns the Gentile Christians not to despise Jewish people or their heritage.<sup>48</sup> Gentiles in Rome looked down on Jewish people partly because of their strange food customs and holy days, which differed from Roman practices. Similarly, Hispanic congregations must continue to change the mindsets of second and third generation Latinos who at times look down on the first generation Latinos and consider

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<sup>42</sup> Romans 2:9; 3:9.

<sup>43</sup> Romans 2:25–29; 4:9–16.

<sup>44</sup> Romans 5:12–21.

<sup>45</sup> Romans 7:7–12.

<sup>46</sup> Romans 9:4,5.

<sup>47</sup> Romans 9:30–10:15.

<sup>48</sup> Romans 11:17–24.

them to be “old school” Christians. Paul emphasized that we should not look down on one another for such differences; we can remain culturally distinct, yet be united in Christ.<sup>49</sup> Paul believed that as a people bound together by a common faith, we should appreciate the gifts brought by each culture. As we continue to labor, live, and love together we fulfill Christ’s desire for a church of diversity. In Paul’s letter to the Galatians the apostle draws attention to the moment of transition in the scheme of redemption that finds its fulfillment in the life death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now in Christ Jesus we “are all children of God through faith.”<sup>50</sup> This also means that anyone (e.g., Jew, Greek, slave, free, male or female) who had been baptized into Christ and thereby being clothed with Christ was also an offspring, or descendent, of Abraham.

### **Non-Pauline letters - Revelation**

The Apostle John’s experience on the Island of Patmos also revealed that for all the ages of eternity, God’s people from every nation will worship together around the throne.<sup>51</sup> The book of Revelation shows us that God uses His Church as a foreshadow of what that future world will be like. Multicultural worship is what heaven will be like. “After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the lamb, Rolled in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud

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<sup>49</sup> Romans 14:1–23.

<sup>50</sup> Galatians 3:26.

<sup>51</sup> Revelation 5:9, 7:9.

voice, saying “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!”<sup>52</sup> Clearly heaven is a multicultural place.

In Dr. Roberto Miranda’s book, *En la Tierra de los Peregrinos: La Iglesia Evangelica Hispana y su llamado redentor*,<sup>53</sup> he believes that as Latino evangelical pastors, leaders, and congregations embrace this multicultural theology, it allows them to play a redemptive and transformative role in this nation. In his book he presents the case that Hispanic immigrants bring moral, spiritual and cultural values that America desperately needs in this time of its history. He establishes the argument that Latinos have deep affinities with the values first established by the founders of this nation and given their prophetic calling, Latinos require a Hispanic Church that will nourish, strengthen and preserve their gifting and potential. He presents the position that a renewed Latino Church is required, with an enlarged vision and an encompassing ministry that addresses the social and spiritual needs of an increasingly urban community.

The Scriptures clearly provide a basis as we consider the shift in traditional Hispanic ministry. As we fulfill the great commission we fulfill God’s purpose to reach the nations as well as every generation with the message of the Gospel. The early Church’s experience of Pentecost is the force behind the theology of inclusiveness. The Pentecostal faith is synonymous with a faith that should encourage diversity. This was the experience of the early Church and this was precisely the reason why Paul was called. Although his message was undeniably first to those of his ethnicity, it is also evident that Paul was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul’s letter to the saints in Rome

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<sup>52</sup> Revelation 7:9-10.

<sup>53</sup> Roberto Miranda, *In the land of the Pilgrims: The Hispanic Evangelical Church and its redemptive calling* (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico: Palabra y Mas, 2009), 14.

addressed an ethnically divided church. He reminded them that their unity in the gospel should transcend their differences.

In *Santa Biblia: Reading the Bible through Hispanic Eyes*, Justo Gonzales reflects on the continued reluctance of the early church to embrace the growing number of Gentiles. He observes that from the moment the early church heard about the conversion of Cornelius Jewish Christians, including the apostles, manifested symptoms of what he calls the “Jonah syndrome”. That is the desire to grow through cross-cultural outreach but without a corresponding willingness to embrace the process of “*mestizaje*”<sup>54</sup> that will inevitably result in changes in the church reflecting the dynamic mixture of both cultures. Not only did the early church struggle with the Jonah Syndrome but Gonzales maintains that many contemporary churches suffer from this problem as well. This observation can also be made of Hispanic Evangelical churches that desire to grow in numbers but not at the expense of their ethnic identity cultural and religious ethos and their language of preference. Today, as we seek to transcend these differences in our Hispanic churches, we must do so by providing our churches a new paradigm that is sound biblically and theologically.

Clearly there is sufficient biblical and theological evidence that justifies a model of ministry that is multicultural. The New Testament clearly depicts situations faced by the early church that were analogous to those faced by Hispanic churches today. The early church depicted in Acts, resisted change like most of our Hispanic churches and pastors today. Many churches dominated by Spanish dominant immigrants want to grow, and are growing at phenomenal rates. These churches strategically target the generation of their children and grandchildren. Their reluctance to accommodate the cultural and

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<sup>54</sup> The process of mixing ancestries.

linguistic means and cultural preferences of native-born Latinos inhibits their success. Churches that resist accepting the usage of English in the different ministries they offer their parishioners, are destined to lose a generation, particularly when children, who despite following many of our customs and traditions communicate better in English. Hispanic congregations must begin to recognize that our children are not the church of the future they are the church of today. Their participation in the church needs to be meaningful for them both as Christians and as Hispanics in order for them to feel that it is a place where they belong. Inevitably, history has shown that most ethnic groups in the U.S. eventually assimilate into American culture. An understanding of our history provides the reasons explaining who we are, why we do the things we do, and prevents us from repeating the same mistakes. Our next chapter addresses the leading factors from a historical perspective that have led to second and third generation Latinos migrating from there Hispanic churches.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To address the trend showing Hispanic Protestants migrating to English-speaking Anglo Protestant churches I have chosen a problem-solving methodology called the Pastoral Circle.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I will integrate books that contributed to an understanding of this issue. The Pastoral Circle involves observing reality or the experience of people and then seeking a solution to their problems in the light of the contributions of the Christian faith and social analysis. The Pastoral Circle can be viewed as a problem-solving strategy that includes five movements. The roots of this first Pastoral Circle can be traced to early Catholic Social Teaching on labor unions and the work of Cardinal Joseph Cardijn<sup>2</sup> with the Young Christian Workers (JOC) of Belgium in pre-World War II Belgium. Cardinal Cardijn encouraged a “See-Judge-Act” approach, offering formation through action, rather than a lecture about the truths of the faith.

The aim of the first movement or stage of the pastoral circle is to become acquainted with or in contact with the situation that is experienced as problematic. The question that is asked is, “What is happening?” In this first step we are invited to listen to the story in order to observe what is happening. Here we see and listen to what people are doing, using and saying. This is the point of insertion. We addressed this in our first chapter. The second moment is a movement from the anecdotal to the analytical. The question that is asked is, “Why is it happening?” Social analysis is then conducted in

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<sup>1</sup> Frans Wijsen, Peter Henriot, Rodrigo Mejia, *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A critical quest for truth and transformation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 2005), 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Wijsen, Henriot, Mejia, *The Pastoral Circle Revisited*, 9.

order to identify these causes as observed in society. An understanding of our history provides the reasons explaining who we are, why we do the things we do, and potentially prevents us from repeating the same mistakes. First, we need to examine the historical patterns of assimilation of the various ethnic groups as seen in America. Historically, ethnic groups in the U.S. eventually assimilate into American culture. The late political scientist Samuel Huntington argued that the latest wave of Latino immigration is fundamentally unlike waves of European workers forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves.<sup>3</sup> But in 2007, the political scientists Jack Citrin, Amy Lerman, Michael Murakami and Kathryn Pearson decided to test Huntington's theory against the available evidence about Latino assimilation and found no evidence whatsoever that Mexican and other Latin American immigrants are assimilating more slowly than did previous waves of immigrants.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, we will briefly review the history of Hispanic Protestantism in America, which explains from a historical perspective why the trend of assimilation to English-speaking churches is inevitable when we ignore that these trends exist. Finally, we will identify some of the contributing factors that provide the reasons for this assimilation.

### **Brief History of Ethnic Assimilation in America**

History serves to show the patterns of behavior that provide the basis for understanding what we experience today. As we conduct a social historical analysis of

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge," *Foreign Policy*, (October 28, 2009) <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/28/the-hispanic-challenge/> (accessed April 10, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Dylan Matthews, "Hispanic Immigrants are assimilating just as quickly as other groups," *Washington Post*, (January 28, 2013), accessed Feb 20, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/01/28/hispanic-immigrants-are-assimilating-just-as-quickly-as-earlier-groups/?utm\\_term=.dec3eb5790a4](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/01/28/hispanic-immigrants-are-assimilating-just-as-quickly-as-earlier-groups/?utm_term=.dec3eb5790a4).

the experience of other ethnic groups in America, we discover the patterns of behavior that are consistent within the Hispanic community as well. A social analysis allows for us to probe the causes, connections and consequences of what is taking place.<sup>5</sup> However, it also helps the members of the community to see that the trends we are seeing in the Hispanic Protestant church are not simply a natural phenomenon to be accepted as inevitable, but rather they are the effect of human decisions taken by identifiable human factors that are in fact changeable.<sup>6</sup> The history of ethnic assimilation in America reflects a pattern of behavior that is inevitable unless we accept the changes that need to be made.

Until 1845, the United States was predominantly an Anglo-Protestant society. There were some others; Native Americans, Jews, English Catholics, Africans, and Germans, but generally speaking they were Protestant. However, as the Irish potato famine of 1845 began, consequently so did mass migration to the United States, which had an immediate impact on the ethnic makeup of America. The end of the nineteenth century as well as the beginning of the twentieth century produced three waves of immigration comparable in size to the current Hispanic influx of immigrants. In the beginning of the 1880's a new wave of immigration that lasted until the First World War brought in the Italians and Eastern European Jews.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, by the 1840's two million Irish immigrants constituted 10 percent of the American population of 20 million residents. By 1925 Italian and Jewish Americans constituted an even larger proportion of the population in America.<sup>8</sup> Ethnic communities were formed by each immigrant group, which helped with the transition to their new environment. These ethnic communities

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<sup>5</sup> Wijsen, Henriot, Mejia, *The Pastoral Circle Revisited*, 229.

<sup>6</sup> Wijsen, Henriot, Mejia, *The Pastoral Circle Revisited*, 229.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Sowell, *Ethnic America: A History* (New York, New York: Basic Books Inc., 1981), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Sowell, *Ethnic America*, 100.

created job opportunities that gave the community a sense of comfort and fellowship. They formed public service institutions such as fire and police departments as well as fraternal, civic and church organizations. In time, immigrants erected institutional organizations within these communities based upon customary models that communicated a message of acculturation. Their celebrations, both locally and nationally, linked their activities with American customs and practices. These ethnic communities served to help immigrants merge with the dominant culture.

Language has always served to unify ethnic groups in America. Breaking linguistic ties was the first step in the assimilation process, with exception of the Irish immigrants who migrated to America already knowing the English language. It promoted civic and economic interaction between immigrant and native. Despite some initial resistance, most foreign-language immigrants readily accepted the necessity of learning the native tongue. In addition, the public school system promoted acculturation and assimilation. Children that enrolled in public schools were immersed in an English language environment and learned the language quickly. The public school system adopted a curriculum that transmitted the American culture, beliefs, political system etc. to immigrant school children.

Intermarriage contributed to ethnic assimilation as well. The intermarriage rate for Jews and Italians was 50% to 60% 90 years after the beginning of their mass migrations.<sup>9</sup> Today, about 15 percent of Hispanic-origin husbands have wives of non-Hispanic origin.<sup>10</sup> Hispanics Americans seem to be headed in the same direction. Recent studies show that Hispanics are assimilating in the same manner and pace as other ethnic

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<sup>9</sup> Sharry M. Lee and Barry Edmonston, *New Marriages, New Families: U.S. Racial and Hispanic Intermarriage*, Population Reference Bureau 66, no. 2 (June 2005): 11.

<sup>10</sup> Lee, Edmonston, *New Marriages, New Families*, 26 – 27.

groups have assimilated.<sup>11</sup> As a result of immigration, the number of Spanish speaking Latinos is greater than those who are currently bilingual and English dominant in the adult Latino population. English, however, is quickly making ground among immigrants. Studies show that English becomes more dominant than Spanish in the second generation.<sup>12</sup> In 2006, research on Spanish retention in heavily Mexican Southern California found Mexicans in the region retain proficiency in their native tongue longer than other immigrant groups, but English quickly dominates. Fewer than 30 percent of the children of Mexican immigrants reported preferring to speak Spanish at home. By generation three, only 17 percent of the Mexican-Americans spoke fluent Spanish.<sup>13</sup> These statistics present the changes and challenges Hispanic churches are facing with ministering to Hispanic families in America. Clearly, the social trends seen historically indicate that all ethnicities in America inevitably assimilated with its dominant culture.

### **Brief History of Hispanic Protestantism in America**

Similar to the ethnic assimilation seen historically in the United States there appears to be a similar trend as we examine the history of the Hispanic Protestant church in the United States. In addition to assimilating with its dominant culture a brief look at the history of Hispanic Protestantism in America will also show that their desire to assimilate with the dominant culture would serve as a general concept that implied exclusion, powerlessness, and subordination to members of the dominant society.

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<sup>11</sup> Dylan Matthews, “Hispanic Immigrants are assimilating just as quickly as other groups,” *Washington Post*, January 28, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Pew Hispanic Center, “Survey Brief: Assimilation and Language,” Pew Research Center 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Jackson, “How well do Hispanics assimilate?” *American Renaissance* (September 2012), accessed January 24, 2017, <https://www.amren.com/features/2012/09/how-well-do-hispanic-assimilate/>.

Though the efforts to establish Hispanic Protestantism on the Iberian Peninsula itself failed, it contributed materially to the origin and development of that tradition in the borderlands of the United States. The English missionary who labored in Gibraltar, H.D. Rule, commended Benigno Cardenas, whom he met in London, to the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in New York. Under the auspices of that Society, Cardenas, in 1853, became the first ordained Hispanic Protestant minister in the territory of New Mexico.<sup>14</sup> Historically, the Spanish speaking community has always struggled to exist wherever British rule was established. Anglo-Celtic immigrants to North America defined the historical trends of belief and practice in American Evangelical Christianity. These beliefs and practices also affected the shape of Hispanic Protestantism. Anglo-Celtic immigrants constituted the leading edge of contact between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking people on the North American frontier. This meeting repeated an ancient encounter between Celts and Iberians on another cultural frontier. This encounter on the northern frontier of New Spain, on both sides of the present international boundary, defined the character of Hispanic American culture in its nineteenth-century origins. The areas inside present-day Texas and New Mexico were the critical points of contact, and it was in these two places that Hispanic American Protestantism began.<sup>15</sup>

History shows us that Hispanic Americans who joined Anglo-American Protestant churches frequently found themselves marginalized within the very institutions designed to minister to them.<sup>16</sup> The period under consideration begins with the

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<sup>14</sup> Ed Sylvest, *Bordering Cultures and the Origins of Hispanic Protestant Christianity*, in *Protestantes/Protestants*, ed. David Maldonado Jr. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1999), 21.

<sup>15</sup> Ed Sylvest, *Bordering Cultures*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Daisy Machado, *Latinos in the Protestant Establishment: Is There a Place for Us at the Feast Table?* in *Protestantes/Protestants*, ed. David Maldonado Jr. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1999), 85-106.

independence of Texas from Mexico. The encounter with Spanish-speaking persons during the period of Texas Independence, 1836-1845, contributed to the racial identity of English-speaking persons in Texas. A smaller number of Anglo-Americans visited and settled in New Mexico during the same period, perhaps because the New Mexico territory remained a part of the Republic of Mexico until 1848. Reports about the moral laxity of the Spanish-speaking inhabitants by travelers and settlers in these regions validated Anglo-Americans contention that God had destined them to occupy and govern the whole continent.<sup>17</sup> The relationships of domination and subordination during the period of 1836-1939 were clearly structured along ethnic lines, with missionaries maintaining control of intuitions designed to minister to Mexicans and Mexican-Americans.<sup>18</sup> During this period the relationships between Anglo-American missionaries and Mexican clergy was characterized by paternalism and dependency.

We would see this same pattern of dominion and subordination again during the development of Latino Pentecostal movement in the United States. The birth of the Latino Protestant movement of Pentecost in the United States traces its origins to Charles Parham's Apostolic Faith Movement and William J Seymour's Azuza street revival in Los Angeles in 1906. Mexicans faithfully attended the revival for three years. Seymour's confidence in the growing leadership abilities let him to ordain Abundio L. Lopez and Juan Navarro Martinez in 1909. They were the first Latinos ordained to Pentecostalism in the United States.<sup>19</sup> Latinos played a small but important role in using the street revival. They ministered to participants across racial lines during worship, prayer, and altar call

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<sup>17</sup> Ed Sylvest, *Bordering Cultures*, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Barton, *Inter-ethnic Relations Between Mexican Americans and Anglo American Methodists in the U.S. Southwest, 1836-1938* in *Protestantes/Protestants*, ed. David Maldonado Jr. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1999), 64.

<sup>19</sup> Gaston Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 51.

services and publicly testified to the transformative healing power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup>

They would help take Seymour's Pentecostal DNA and spread it to Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Latin Americans for generations to come.

As the revival rapidly spread, many Pentecostals recognized the need for greater organization and accountability. The founding fathers and mothers of the Assemblies of God met in Hot Springs, Arkansas on April 2, 1914 to promote unity and doctrinal stability, establish legal standing, coordinate the mission enterprise, and establish a ministerial training school.<sup>21</sup> However, the story of early Hispanic Pentecostals is dominated by two figures, Francisco Olazabal (1886-1937) and Henry C. Ball (1896-1989). Olazabal was converted in California at the turn of the century. He would later feel the call of God on his life and would return to Mexico to prepare for ministry as a Methodist.

In 1917, Olazabal would become a Pentecostal preacher credentialed with the Assemblies of God after having been baptized in the spirit as he attended a home prayer meeting. Olazabal's new ministry soon bore fruit as young people who were spirit baptized in his services entered full-time ministry, many joining the Assemblies of God. In 1918, he moved to El Paso Texas, staying long enough to plant a church before traveling across the United States holding revival campaigns. As more Spanish-speaking people were converted enjoying the Pentecostal ranks, more of their ministers would later join the Latin American Convention of the Assemblies of God, which was founded in 1918 under the leadership of Henry C. Ball. As the work grew in Mexico so did the push for greater Mexican leadership. Soon they would call for the creation of a Mexican

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<sup>20</sup> Gaston Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 58.

<sup>21</sup> Efrain Espinosa, "Hispanic Pentecostalism," *Enrichment Journal*, accessed on February 15, 2017, [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199904/059\\_hispanic.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199904/059_hispanic.cfm).

Assemblies of God District on a par with their white counterparts. However, they soon became frustrated with Ball because they seemed to drag their feet about handing over the leadership of the work.<sup>22</sup> In Gaston Espinosa's book titled, "*Latin Pentecostals in America: Faith and Politics in Action*", he states the following: "Despite the public support for Mexican leadership, Ball and other Euro-American leaders were gaining a systematic monopoly over the administration and organizational apparatus of the Latino Assemblies of God Convention, and this invariably marginalized Mexican voices and aspirations. Within just a few years, they controlled virtually all of the main sources of power and influence such as the magazine and publishing house, hymnal, convention organization, ordination certification, and increasingly ministerial and even church assignments. Yet they could not control the bodies, churches, and hearts of the Mexican people." This would lead a group of Mexican Assemblies of God ministers to call for reform at the 1920 Latino Assemblies of God Convention in Magnolia Park.

By 1921 many Mexicans were unhappy with Ball's leadership, which would lead them to call for reform and a restructuring of the movement on November 22, 1922 at the Assemblies of God Convention in Victoria, Texas. Olazabal, nominated by the Mexican pastors, would lead the charge for the creation of a Mexican led district, but would be denied its formation by Ball and the leadership of the General Council of the Assemblies of God.<sup>23</sup> This position would cause the exodus of many Mexican ministers led by Olazabal who felt marginalized and dominated, to leave the Assemblies of God and form the Latin American Council of Churches in 1923.

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<sup>22</sup> Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 112-113.

<sup>23</sup> Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 121.

Finally, in 1929, the Latin American Convention of the Assemblies of God would become the Latin American District Council, with Ball serving as a Superintendent. In 1937, with the approaching retirement of Henry C. Ball, Demetrio Bazan, a dominant Hispanic figure in the Hispanic ministry in the U.S. Would be elected Superintendent of the Latin American District Council of the Assemblies of God. This would introduce a new era in the development of the Hispanic Pentecostal work that has continued until the present day.<sup>24</sup> As of January 2015, there were more than 2,705 officially recognized Hispanic congregations in the General Council of the Assemblies of God, USA which includes 14 Hispanic districts, and more than 3,600 ministers.

Hispanics have grown in numbers within Anglo Protestant congregations as well. According to Dr. Jesse Miranda, the president of the National Alliance of Evangelical Ministries, "Hispanics account for almost all recent growth in evangelical churches, even in predominantly black and anglo congregations."<sup>25</sup> Even surveys conducted in 1993 stated that more than half of all Hispanics who are active in Protestant churches in the U.S. attended predominantly English-speaking Anglo congregations.<sup>26</sup> The other 50% of active Hispanic Protestants attended predominantly Spanish-speaking or bilingual churches, either autonomous Hispanic congregations or Hispanic Departments in Anglo, Black or Korean churches.<sup>27</sup>

This is an alarming trend for the Hispanic Protestant church as they too continue to experience an exodus of their members to Anglo congregations. In my faith tradition as an Assemblies of God minister I have witnessed the shift in the hearts and minds of

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<sup>24</sup> Espinosa, *Latino Pentecostals in America*, 126 – 127.

<sup>25</sup> David C. Byrne, "The Sociological Context of the Hispanic Evangelical Church Leader in the U.S.," *Instituto Alma*, accessed on January 4, 2017, <http://www.institutoalma.org/Dmin1.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Holland, *Report on Hispanic Protestant Growth*, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Holland, *Report on Hispanic Protestant Growth*, 2009.

many Latino evangelicals as they consider the move to Anglo evangelical churches. A shift that believes that traditional Hispanic churches no longer meet the needs of their second and third generations.

### **Contributing Factors of Hispanic Protestant Migration**

Hispanic Protestants in America have been shaped by Anglo-Protestant culture and have embraced a new set of spiritual traits that have become dominant in their formation as christians. However, Hispanic Protestant religious practices and beliefs are to be considered in order to understand this religious trend within the Hispanic Protestant community. Hispanic Christians in general are highly religious. As stated in the PEW report, regardless of their religious tradition, most Latinos pray every day, have a crucifix or other religious object in their home and most attend a religious service at least once a month.<sup>28</sup> In some Hispanic Protestant traditions, particularly in Pentecostal churches, attendance to weekly services is considered a membership requirement. Some traditional Hispanic Pentecostal churches may have up to three weeknight services. For traditional Hispanic Protestants frequency of church attendance serves as a good indicator of those that are truly committed to Christ. Research confirms that Hispanic Protestants view attendance at religious services as an effective measure of religious commitment.<sup>29</sup>

Traditional Hispanic Protestant churches have an identity with which many second and third generation Latinos no longer identify. It is rare to encounter a congregation characterized as a “mega” church among this group. Traditional Hispanic Protestant churches tend to be more familial and live as extended families providing a

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<sup>28</sup> Pew Hispanic Center, *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion* (Pew Research Center 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Pew, *Changing Faiths*, 23.

place in which a culture and ethnicity is transmitted. It is here also that personal relationships are nourished and where persons are supported during critical moments in their lives. Some characterize these “small” churches as folk societies.<sup>30</sup>

A folk society is basically composed of a group of people who are small in number, have a long-term association, know each other well, and have a strong sense of belonging.<sup>31</sup> The Hispanic Protestant congregation can be accurately described as a family group. The membership of the congregation is usually composed of one to three identifiable large families who are related to one another through marriages. Other smaller family units also join those large families through marriages or through what is known as *padrinos* or *madrinas* (godfathers or godmothers). These persons become part of the family, forming what is known as the extended family, through sacramental participation in baptisms but also through participation in such rituals as “*quinceañeras*” (a significant celebration of a young woman’s fifteenth birthday in the Spanish culture, ) and weddings. Also, the familial relationship is also expressed in familiar words. Persons address one another in endearing terms, “*hermano*” (brother) and “*hermana*” (sister). These terms are well known among Hispanic Protestants, as well as other protestant groups as defining their relationship of faith.<sup>32</sup>

However, those who would prefer a more private atmosphere in their religious experience at times misinterpret this sense of intimacy. Many prefer attending a church that is less personal and less intimate. This at times weighs heavily into their reasoning for leaving a church that is too familial. The commitment to family is one of the

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<sup>30</sup> Ruben P. Armendariz, *The Protestant Hispanic Congregation: Identity*, in *Protestantes/Protestants*, ed. David Maldonado Jr. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1999), 239.

<sup>31</sup> Armendariz, *The Protestant Hispanic Congregation*, 239.

<sup>32</sup> Armendariz, *The Protestant Hispanic Congregation*, 241.

characteristics of Latin American culture. The individual in Latin America has a deep awareness of his membership of family.<sup>33</sup> The world of Latinos consists of a pattern of intimate personal relationships. As Latino Americans migrate they begin to embrace the American way of life and slowly begin to lose their own ethnic identity in order to “fit in” with his/her new environment.

Secondly, there are linguistic factors that affect the mindset of many Latinos as they consider migrating to English-speaking churches. Although it may be assumed that Hispanic Protestant congregations carry out their congregational life using the Spanish language exclusively, the reality is that today most Hispanic Protestant congregations are bilingual due to the fact that they are mainly made up of second and third generation Latinos who consider English to be their first language,<sup>34</sup> but struggle in providing meaningful ministry in both languages. This bilingual condition and experience is a natural expression and a reality with which they live daily. For most Hispanics, English is the spoken language in the workplace and Spanish is the language of the home. This reality carries over into their church and religious life. Although practically all-ethnic groups in America have attempted to maintain their native languages, the general pattern has been for the use of ancestral tongue to decline noticeably as the generations pass and for English to become the principal language among third and subsequent generations.<sup>35</sup>

First generation immigrants, as well as second generation U.S born Hispanics, in Protestant churches are fluent in the Spanish language. It is the third and newly fourth generations that have declined in the use of Spanish. This presents a real challenge for

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<sup>33</sup> Armendariz, *The Protestant Hispanic Congregation*, 243.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Alba, *Language Assimilation Today: Bilingualism Persists More Than in the Past, But English Still Dominates*, Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research University at Albany (December 2004).

<sup>35</sup> Alba, *Language Assimilation Today*, (2004).

third generation Hispanics to survive in a predominantly first and second generation Hispanic Protestant church. Consequently, it is not surprising to find Hispanic Protestant congregations using both languages and calling themselves bilingual. By the use of both languages, English and Spanish, the Hispanic Protestant church can minister to and serve all generations of Hispanics. Without bilingualism, entire families would be forced to divide their loyalties. This is a real concern voiced by those who advocate a bilingual ministry<sup>36</sup> instead of monolingual ministry, Spanish or English.

This presents a challenge especially when we look at how this impacts the worship in the Hispanic Protestant church. Worship holds a central and special place in the life of a congregation. It is a corporate event in which the people celebrate, affirm, and articulate their faith and religious experience. Worship in a Hispanic church reflects the Hispanic people. However, Hispanic Protestant congregations have been affected by the acculturation among its members. According to the Pew Hispanic Center among Hispanic congregations, 36.2% said they never worship bilingually, 18.4% said they do so all the time, 45.4% reported they worshipped bilingually some of the time. The Hispanic clergy do not agree on the question of bilingualism in worship or its impact on some segments of the congregation. This has created a dilemma for many second and third generation Hispanics that would much rather communicate in their first language, English, but attend churches who worship in the language of their ancestors.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Hispanic Association of Bilingual Bicultural Ministry (HABBM) is committed to organizing Hispanic ministry leaders throughout the nation with a mission to develop leaders from among second and third generation Hispanics. They provide opportunities for national networking and peer support with other individuals and organizations creatively reaching out to English-dominant Hispanics.

<sup>37</sup> Pew Research Center, *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion* (April 25, 2007), 49-52.

This is particularly the case with “Baby-Boomers” and their children who no longer speak or understand any variety of Spanish with ease. Hispanic congregations whose members represent three, four or more generations tend to transfer their membership to Anglo congregations after having earned college degrees and land well-paying jobs. Many who remain in the Hispanic congregation, as soon as they can afford to, move out to more integrated residential areas and become commuters and join Anglo congregations as well.<sup>38</sup>

Thirdly, research has also revealed a positive relationship between acculturation levels and social economic status suggesting that the more acculturated Latinos come from backgrounds with higher standards of living and better-educated parents.<sup>39</sup> Higher levels of acculturation also positively related to increased family involvement with external social system such as school, work, community in other institutions in the United States. These findings confirm the claim that schooling, media and peers positively influence acculturation levels among the children and grandchildren of immigrants. The use of English as the primary language of instruction and socialization in public and private schools, and as the language, used in the media preferred by children, adolescents and young adults, has an overall negative effect on Spanish language retention, thereby increasing levels of acculturation.

For a long time, the Hispanic congregation in the United States was a replica of its counterpart in Mexico or the Caribbean. For at least half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S. Hispanic church depended to a large degree on imported pastors. They were not

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<sup>38</sup> John Hall, *Hispanic churches facing challenges of bilingual culture*, Associated Baptist Press (November 2004), (accessed January 20, 2017) [https://baptistnews.com/article/hispanic-churches-facing-challenge-of-bilingual-culture-leaders-say/#.WLmd\\_BiZN0s](https://baptistnews.com/article/hispanic-churches-facing-challenge-of-bilingual-culture-leaders-say/#.WLmd_BiZN0s).

<sup>39</sup> Daniel A. Rodriguez, *A Future for the Latino Church: Models for Multilingual and Multigenerational Hispanic Congregations* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2011), 47.

expensive, and they were orthodox. These imported pastors set the tone of Hispanic Protestant church life in the United States. We have been blessed with these special men and women who paved the way for thousands to receive Christ and their efforts to train and equip the next generation of pastors and leaders. They supported the vision of extending the kingdom of God through their prayers, their time, their talents, and their resources. None of us would be here today had it not been for their commitment and their convictions. However, in their attempt to keep their congregations alien from the American situation, they drove many into Anglos churches. They failed to acknowledge the proportion of members in their congregations that spoke predominantly in English.

They underestimated the influence of public education and of the media on their members which were more “American” than Hispanic. As they attempted to honor and build on the Hispanic tradition they focused most of their ministry to meeting the needs of multitudes of visitors and immigrants of Latin America while losing an entire generation of children, young people, young adults and middle aged professionals. If Hispanic Protestant churches are to survive they will need to lead their congregations to a model of church life that is home as much for the immigrant who speaks no English, as for the acculturated Hispanic who barely speaks Spanish.

The 2010 Census showed that Hispanic population growth in the new century has been more a product of the natural increase (births minus deaths) of the existing population than it has been of new international migration. Of the 10.2 million increase in the Hispanic population since 2000, about 60% of the increase (or 6 million) is due to natural increase and 40% is due to net international migration.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the 2010 Census showed that Hispanic population increased by 15.2 million between 2000 and

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<sup>40</sup> Richard Fry, *Latino Settlement In The New Century*, Pew Research Center, October 23, 2008.

2010, accounting for over half of the 27.3 million increase in the total population of the United States. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent, which was four times the growth in the total population at 10 percent.<sup>41</sup>

A new Pew Research Center analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2013 that a record 33.2 million Hispanics in the U.S. speak English proficiently.<sup>42</sup> In 2013, this group made up 68% of all Hispanics ages 5 and older, up from 59% in 2000. At the same time that the share of Latinos who speak English proficiently is growing, the share that speaks Spanish at home has been declining over the last 13 years. In 2013, 73% of Latinos ages 5 and older said they speak Spanish at home, down from 78% who said the same in 2000. Despite this decline, a record 35.8 million Hispanics speak Spanish at home, a number that has continued to increase as the nation's Hispanic population has grown.

These shifts coincide with the rise of U.S.-born Hispanics as a share of the nation's Hispanic population, and the slowdown in immigration to the U.S. from Latin America. In 2013, U.S. born Hispanics exceeded foreign-born Hispanics by nearly two to one, 35 million to 19 million.<sup>43</sup> As a result, since 2000, U.S. Hispanic population growth has been driven primarily by U.S. births rather than the arrival of new immigrants.<sup>44</sup> Clearly, this presents both an opportunity and a challenge for Hispanic pastors who are bilingual and a very serious problem for those who struggle to minister in English.

Finally, the lack of pastoral training of Hispanic Clergy in the United States has also contributed to the problem as well. Generally speaking, pastoral training followed

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<sup>41</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *The Hispanic Population 2010: 2010 Census Briefs*, Issued May 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad, Renee Stepler, Mark Hugo Lopez, *English Proficiency On The Rise Among Latinos*, Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Krogstad, Stepler, Lopez, *English Proficiency On The Rise Among Latinos*, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Krogstad, Stepler, Lopez, *English Proficiency On The Rise Among Latinos*, 2015.

one of two traditional tracks. The first track is a Bible school or institute track that is available in a number of cities across the country and is sometimes available in Spanish. These tend to be denominational programs that do not address the current ministry needs of the large number of pastors who are already serving a church congregation.<sup>45</sup> Many Hispanic ministers use these programs as their preparation for a lifetime of Christian service. However, the majority of these programs are specific to a particular denominational perspective. They are not necessarily available to Hispanic students from other groups. In addition, Anglo congregations have chosen to have Bible schools with Spanish programs. This has served to fill the leadership gap in the Hispanic Protestant Church.<sup>46</sup>

The other track for ministerial training of Hispanics are the traditional seminaries that seek to involve Hispanics in their English-based programs. Many of these are excellent programs that provide quality theological and ministerial education for the few Hispanics who can take advantage of them. Hispanic students face many obstacles as they prepare themselves for full time ministry in the traditionally "Anglo" seminaries. The lack of a college degree as noted above is a key limitation. Another limiting factor is a lack of English proficiency among many of the leaders who are already serving in a church or who are called to the ministry. Financial concerns are also a major issue as are personal issues such as family and church responsibilities. The training of Hispanic ministers has always been a struggle because most Hispanics have had poor high school educations and a lack of financial resources.

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<sup>45</sup> David C. Byrne, *The Sociological Context of the Hispanic Evangelical Church Leader in the U.S.*, Instituto Alma, accessed January 20, 2017, <http://www.institutoalma.org/Dmin1.htm>.

<sup>46</sup> Byrne, Instituto Alma.

In 1994 a total of only 1670 Hispanics enrolled in all of the seminaries belonging to the Association of Theological School. Dr. Pablo Jimenez, the former director of the AETH (Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana) stated that Bible institutes and seminaries must continue to cooperate with each other if we are to effectively build Hispanic leadership.<sup>47</sup> Other traditional Anglo seminaries are offering multi-level programs for Hispanic leadership development to meet the needs of the growing Latino population in the U.S. Seminaries such as Azusa Pacific University are conducting these programs to meet the needs of those Hispanic Americans on the west coast. Dr. Jesse Miranda, the Director of these programs, provides certificate training in the community and a masters program that includes a more limited English proficiency track. Hispanics in this track can take their first 20 units in Spanish, the second 20 units in bilingual courses and then finish their program in English.<sup>48</sup>

It is worth noting, in this same context, that it is not an unmixed blessing for the Hispanic church when its students study in established English-language seminaries. Those students who do attend an English-language seminary program are often faced with the same pressures as national leaders from other countries who come to the United States to study. It is generally more profitable financially for a student who has graduated from seminary to pastor an "Anglo" congregation after graduation than a Hispanic one. Many Hispanic seminary graduates never find their way into Hispanic ministry. The opposite is often true as some of the most capable Hispanic leaders are slowly led away from Hispanic ministry to "Anglo" ministries. Many Hispanic leaders are concerned that the rate of leadership development among Hispanic Protestants does not match the rate of

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<sup>47</sup> Byrne, Instituto Alma.

<sup>48</sup> Byrne, Instituto Alma.

Hispanic migration to America. Innovative training programs need to be developed in light of the high standards of many denominations and the low educational levels of many Hispanics.

To summarize, the question we ask as we conduct social analysis is why are Hispanic Protestant migrating to Anglo Protestant churches? They are migrating in part because history in the U.S. teaches us that ethnic assimilation appears to be the inevitable trend. Hispanic Protestant churches have an identity with which many second and third generation Latinos no longer identify with, and there appears to be a lack of pastoral training of Hispanic clergy in the United States, and the willingness to implement a multicultural ministry model to meet the needs of our English speaking Hispanics today.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PROJECT DESIGN**

The aim of this fourth stage of the pastoral circle is to move us to a pastoral plan of action or response to the issue being addressed. The question that is asked is, “What do we do?” A response is the only logical conclusion left after having contacted, analyzed and reflected upon the issues in question. In the fourth movement I will present the results of the research conducted within the context of my faith tradition of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God, as well as propose a pastoral plan which includes defining the qualities needed within the fellowship of Hispanic Protestant clergy to implement a multicultural ministry, and present a model of multicultural ministry that should serve to show new ways for traditional Hispanic Protestant churches to meet the needs of its second and third generation Hispanic congregants, and thereby keep them active in the Hispanic congregation.

As we seek to propose some solutions to address the needs of Hispanic Protestant Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we'll need to consider implementing a model of ministry that will reach English-speaking Hispanic American believers as well as non-believers. I believe that as we enter the 21st century, the new frontier for the mission of the Hispanic Evangelical church is multicultural ministry. A multicultural church is a community of believers who have as a current reality or hold as a core value the inclusion of culturally diverse people, and who come together and serve as a single body to live out Christ's Great Commission. Multicultural ministry is a culturally diverse model of ministry that communicates the Gospel to a culturally diverse population within a church's field of

service, creating a community, which celebrates unity through diversity in Christ. However, there are some realities that a multicultural commitment must take into consideration. There is a chance that a commitment to multiculturalism creates conflict along cultural divides and as a result it could slow down the growth of the congregation as they learn to listen to all the voices present in the congregation.

Multicultural ministry suggests a diversity of worshippers and worship experiences within the local congregation. The key to successful multicultural ministry lies in embracing the biblical vision of multiculturalism, as well as understanding the diversity of cultures within the church. Hispanic congregations are made up of people from all parts of Latin America and each nationality has its own culture, language, and way of speaking Spanish. The fact that many Hispanic Americans have adopted English as their first language creates an enormous challenge for Hispanic congregations.

Hispanic congregations all face the struggle of preserving their first generation traditions without losing younger generations, which normally means the second and third generation. Their pews are being filled with first generation immigrants who would much rather prefer worship services in Spanish. Unfortunately, they often see their children grow up and leave to become members of English-speaking congregations.

For this reason I believe that traditional Hispanic churches will need to implement a more multicultural mindset of ministry in order to meet the needs of second and third generation Hispanics. In addition, I believe that by embracing this shift Hispanic churches can open the door to not only reach Latinos, but also reach people from every ethnic group. Anglo, African-American, Asian, etc. all sitting under one roof, in one accord in worship to the one God. Someone once said that the most segregated hour in

America is found on Sunday morning. By opening our doors to reach others we fulfill our mission to reach the nations with the Gospel. However, this shift in Hispanic ministry has been met with much resistance by many Hispanic clergy and church boards that would much rather function as monolingual Hispanic churches. What many Hispanic leaders fail to understand is that these second, third and even fourth generation Latinos have the potential of providing more financial and educational resources than those that preceded them. Educational resources that are necessary in the development of ministries, the financial resources to purchase better facilities to meet the needs of the growing Hispanic population, and the human resources of women and men, gifted by the Spirit, with great leadership potential that has been affirmed by education and lifelong experiences.

### **Research Conducted**

In my research I surveyed over 100 pastors of the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God, which is one of the largest Hispanic districts of the Assemblies of God with over 450 churches and over 1050 ministers. The questionnaire consisted of several questions, which I asked the pastors to answer anonymously.<sup>1</sup> The first question I asked was “*How many years have you served in pastoral ministry?*” 79% had served over 20 years, 8% had served between 16 and 20 years, 7% had served between 11 and 15 years, 4% had served between 6 and 10 years, and 2% had served between 1 and 5 years. One of the challenges we face today is that the average age of the Protestant pastors in the United States has increased by a decade over the last 25 years, putting it

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II – Research Questionnaire.

just six years below the current minimum retirement age of 62, according to a recent study by the Barna Group.<sup>2</sup> Barna President David Kinnaman called the data on aging clergy significant. "When it comes to church leadership, this is one of the more significant findings that we will talk about today ... the average age of today's Protestant leader in the last 25 years has gotten 10 years older. In 1991 when George Barna wrote his book, *Today's Pastors*, the typical pastor was 44 years old. And now, just 25 years later, the typical pastor is 54 years old." This could potentially present a significant challenge when you consider that the older we get the harder it is to make significant changes in our methodology for ministry. The world has changed faster than it ever has in just the past few years. Some pastors have kept up with the changes and have improved their skill sets, their technological abilities, and their abilities to relate to this vastly different world and culture. However many have been reluctant to transition to a multicultural model of ministry, which has led to the migration trends noted in this study.

Next, the survey asks, "*How many years have you served as pastor of your local church?*" 70% are currently pastoring their local church for 6 years or more, 22% are currently pastoring their local church for less than 2 years, and 8% are currently pastoring their local church between three and five years. This statistic speaks to the reliability of the findings of the survey because the pastors surveyed possessed many years of experience with their local church, which affirms the validity of its results.

The pastors were then asked, "*What level of pastoral training have you received?*" 57% attended at least a Bible Institute, 17% attended a Bible College, and 17% attended a Seminary. In our community of faith, ministers are only required to complete two years

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<sup>2</sup> Barna Research Group, *The Aging of America's Pastors*, Research releases in Leaders and Pastors, March 1, 2017.

of Bible Institute in order to apply for ministerial credentials with the Spanish Eastern District of the Assemblies of God. This could be the reason why so many of our second and third generation Hispanics have expressed their concerns with the lack of theological and ministerial training throughout Hispanic clergy today. As the Hispanic population continues to grow reaching nearly 55 million in the United States according to the latest U.S. Census statistics,<sup>3</sup> so must the training of Hispanic leadership to meet the needs of our country's growing Hispanic population.

They were then asked, "Is there a problem with the second and third generation of Hispanics that have left the church?" 71% responded yes there is a problem, 12% responded no there is not a problem, and 17% responded they were not sure. The majority of our pastors acknowledge that there is a problem that this trend needs to be addressed. Clearly, first generation Pastors are experiencing great difficulty in retaining the second and third generation and are finally acknowledging that a change in ministry philosophy is necessary in order to meet their needs. The fact that many were unsure should worry us as well because this reflects the difficulty many pastors have with acknowledging that this problem exists.

They were asked to measure the severity of the problem, "How serious is this problem for our Hispanic churches?" 71% consider this a major problem, 21% consider this a minor problem, and 8% don't consider this a problem. The majority of the pastors I surveyed considered it a major problem because they face the struggle of retaining younger generations while preserving their church traditions. This becomes an impossible task unless some form of English program and ministry are offered. As we

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<sup>3</sup> Renee Stepler, Anna Brown, *Statistical Research of Hispanics in the United States*, Pew Research Center, April 2014.

lose our youth we also lose their gifts, talents, and their economic support, which we cannot afford to lose.

Sixth, “How many members left your church from the second and third generation for an English-speaking church?” 44% lost more than 6 members, 26 % lost between two and five members, 15% had not lost anyone, and 15% were unsure how many exactly. Almost half of the pastors surveyed expressed their frustrations in losing the second and third generation to the English speaking churches. Many of those who left made the move primarily to meet the needs of their English-speaking children who struggled with understanding the Spanish language. Some were ministry leaders that left and in doing so created a void with the absence of their leadership. In addition, their decision to leave made an economic impact because many of these second and third Hispanics were now college-educated professionals that earned substantially more than their parents.

The seventh question begins to address specifically the reasons why they have experienced this migration trend in their local church. They were given seven reasons to choose from including the following:

- Prefer English services
- English ministry for children
- Better youth ministries for their youth
- Better facilities
- More Organized
- Doctrinal differences
- Bigger church with more programs and ministries

47% prefer services in English to meet the needs of their families, 28% more organized, and 15% desired better facilities. The second and third generations of Hispanics grow up speaking English and become more Americanized than their parents. The children grow up wanting better facilities and specialized programs that are well organized in English like they find at Anglo congregations. Many of them want the contemporary worship services they see in Anglo churches, and not the Hispanic-influenced traditional services common to congregations of immigrants.

Finally, the pastors were asked, “Have you addressed this migration trend? If yes, describe what your ministry has done to address the congregants who are thinking about leaving for an English-speaking church.” 60% stated that they have addressed this trend, and 40% stated they have not addressed this trend. Clearly, Hispanic pastors have recognized that something must be done in order to reverse the trend and we are beginning to address the needs of the second and third generation. The 60% that answered “yes” incorporated the English language in worship, preaching, teaching, youth and children ministries. They are beginning to understand that the message does not have to change but the method in which we deliver the message must change in order to retain English-speaking Hispanics or bilingual Hispanics of the second and third generation. About six-in-ten U.S. adult Hispanics (62%) speak English or are bilingual, according to an analysis of the Pew Research Center’s 2013 National Survey of Latinos. Hispanics in the United States break down into three groups when it comes to their use of language: 36% are bilingual, 25% mainly use English and 38% mainly use Spanish. Among those who speak English, 59% are bilingual.<sup>4</sup> According to Pew survey’s conducted in 2011,

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<sup>4</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad, Ana-Gonzalez Barrera, *A majority of English-speaking Hispanics in the U.S. are bilingual*, Pew Research Center, March 2015.

the Hispanic population is among the fastest growing in the nation. The survey showed that Latino adults valued both the ability to speak English *and* to speak Spanish. Fully 87% said Latino immigrants need to learn English to succeed. At the same time, nearly all (95%) said it is important for future generations of U.S. Hispanics to speak Spanish.<sup>5</sup>

### **Pastoral Qualities for Multicultural Ministry**

The crucial element for the effective implementation of multicultural ministry is the pastor. As the Hispanic population in the U.S. continues to increase so must the development of Spanish-speaking pastors and church leaders who are already called and committed to leading the church but who lack the tools they need for long-term success. Without a knowledgeable pastor one has chaos in the local church. In most situations of church ministry a local pastor is necessary. When it comes to multicultural ministry, at least presently, in the formative stages of the development of multicultural ministry throughout the church, the presence and role of the pastor is most vital for a number of reasons. They need strong direction, focus and leadership. Left to local church boards or a non-aggressive style of leadership, the church will never move beyond its comfort zone.

As I examine the role of the pastor as it relates to the shift of ministry models for the local church certain qualities come to mind. The first quality as to the kind of pastor needed is one that understands the socio-cultural reality behind ministry in today's society. Most pastors are quite knowledgeable about theology, biblical issues, church history, church policy, administration, sermon preparation, and pastoral care. But many do not always understand relationships, especially across gender, racial, ethnic, social

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<sup>5</sup> Krogstad, Barrera, *A majority of English-speaking Hispanics in the U.S. are bilingual*, March 2015.

differences, nor the social changes that are impacting our society. Because second and third generation Hispanic Evangelical congregations are more educated, the pastor needs to be sharp, relevant and in touch with society's changing needs. In my experience Hispanic ministry has changed significantly. Traditionally, Hispanic churches generally offered men and women's ministries to meet the needs of their adults. Today, some Hispanic churches have expanded their ministry to adults to include married couples, single adults, parenting and the elderly. Each one of the aforementioned groups presents a segment of people in our society that has changed significantly in recent years. These traditional pastors have had an approach to ministry that is more vertical than horizontal in nature. They were inspired by the great commission texts in the New Testament and concluded that the most important tasks entrusted to Christians include preaching the gospel, making and nurturing disciples, and planting indigenous reproducing churches. They are strong on personal evangelism but with little or no passion for justice for the poor and liberation for the oppressed. The horizontal approach to ministry is inspired by Jesus' call for social responsibility. This approach concludes that the most important tasks entrusted to Christians includes engaging in social action and social justice. What is needed is a more holistic approach that incorporates both the vertical and the horizontal approach to ministry, one that inseparably interrelates and intertwines evangelism and social responsibility. Dr. Eldin Villafane urges the church to acknowledge, "that an authentic and relevance spirituality must be holistic responding to both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of life. The inclusion of the social dimension in a redefinition of spirituality is the missing ingredient of contemporary evangelical spirituality."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Eldin Villafane, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflection on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 12.

A second quality as to the kind of pastor needed is one who is willing to share authority and responsibility. Multicultural ministry requires that ministry responsibilities be shared in the church across the various groups. Whose role is it to make critical decisions like leading in vision casting in a church, and how authority is shared or not, is a crucial factor in the success of any ministry, but especially multicultural ministry. A pastor who tends to struggle with sharing ministry responsibilities is taking a quick, short step to destroying any kind of effective ministry. Thus pastors need to downplay their egos and experience a genuine spirit of inclusiveness with their people and demonstrate a spirit of meekness as we see in the life of Christ. Failure to delegate will always limit a pastor's ability to expand the ministry of the church because that ministry is limited to one person. Often the pastor who does not delegate gets overwhelmed and essentially stops functioning. At other times, he may move toward overworking until the inevitable burnout takes place. Many pastors struggle with relinquishing control to others in the ministry. They struggle with trusting others to make decisions that they are unaware of. They feel as if they have lost control of the church if someone else gets involved in ministry. Others have insecurity issues. These pastors worry that they will be perceived as disposable if others do some of the critical work. Their lack of security often means that they will hoard assignments even if they do not get done. Some pastors struggle with training and equipping others to do the task of ministry. They forget that the purpose of the ministry is to train the saints for the work of ministry. They don't realize that a little investment in someone else only makes their work more productive. The busyness of the ministry requires for pastors to prioritize in order to maximize their efficiency as leaders of the flock. Instead they often spend time on minutiae that makes little difference. Some

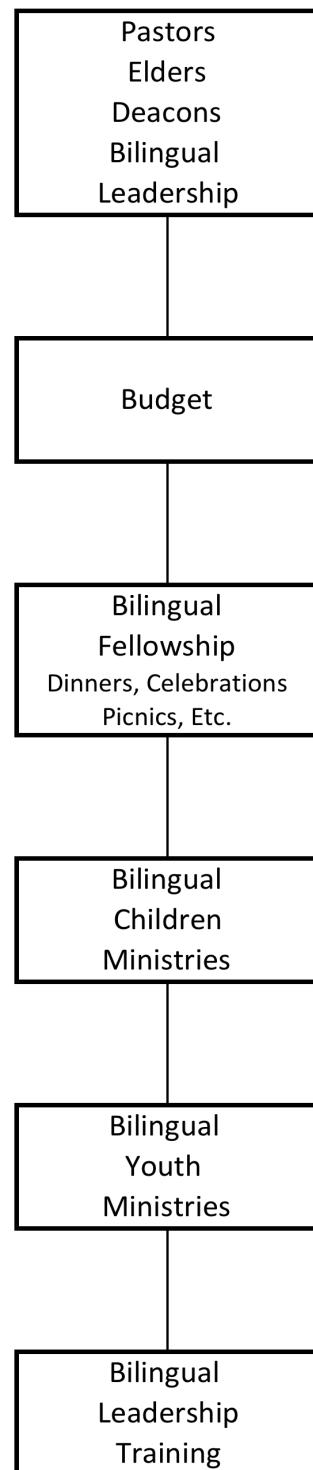
can't leave their comfort zones. They would rather do the things they've always done because they are comfortable doing so. If they delegated their routine tasks, they would have to move out of their comfort zones to take on new challenges. Some have analysis by paralysis. If they or a subordinate take on a task, the pastor wants to look at it from every angle in order to satisfy himself and not necessarily because they want to improve the task at hand. They are famous for preparing long updates for church business meetings when a short summary would suffice. They think they are preparing for every contingency when such a feat is impossible. Rarely does a non-delegating pastor have all of these symptoms. But it does not matter if he has one or multiple symptoms if the end result is a failure to delegate. A failure to delegate inevitably leads to a failure of leadership.

Third is the need for a pastor who has a positive image of self in terms of ethnic identity. This is a most vital quality, since a pastor who has a poor sense of self-acceptance with regard to his or her ethnic identity may have a difficult time accepting others who might be different or similar to him or her. The pastor who is still struggling with his/her own identity will not be of much value to the many members who are also struggling with the same concerns, especially the youth of the congregation. This also applies to younger pastors who struggle with their Hispanic identity as well. It is important to note that many Hispanic Evangelical churches have embraced the vision of hiring Youth Pastors to assist the Senior Pastor in the ministry offered to the youth. At times there has been conflict related to each other's perspective particularly when the Senior Pastor is a first generation Latino and the Youth Pastor is a second or even third generation Latino that may be struggling with his/her Hispanic identity.

## **Bilingual Multicultural Model of Ministry**

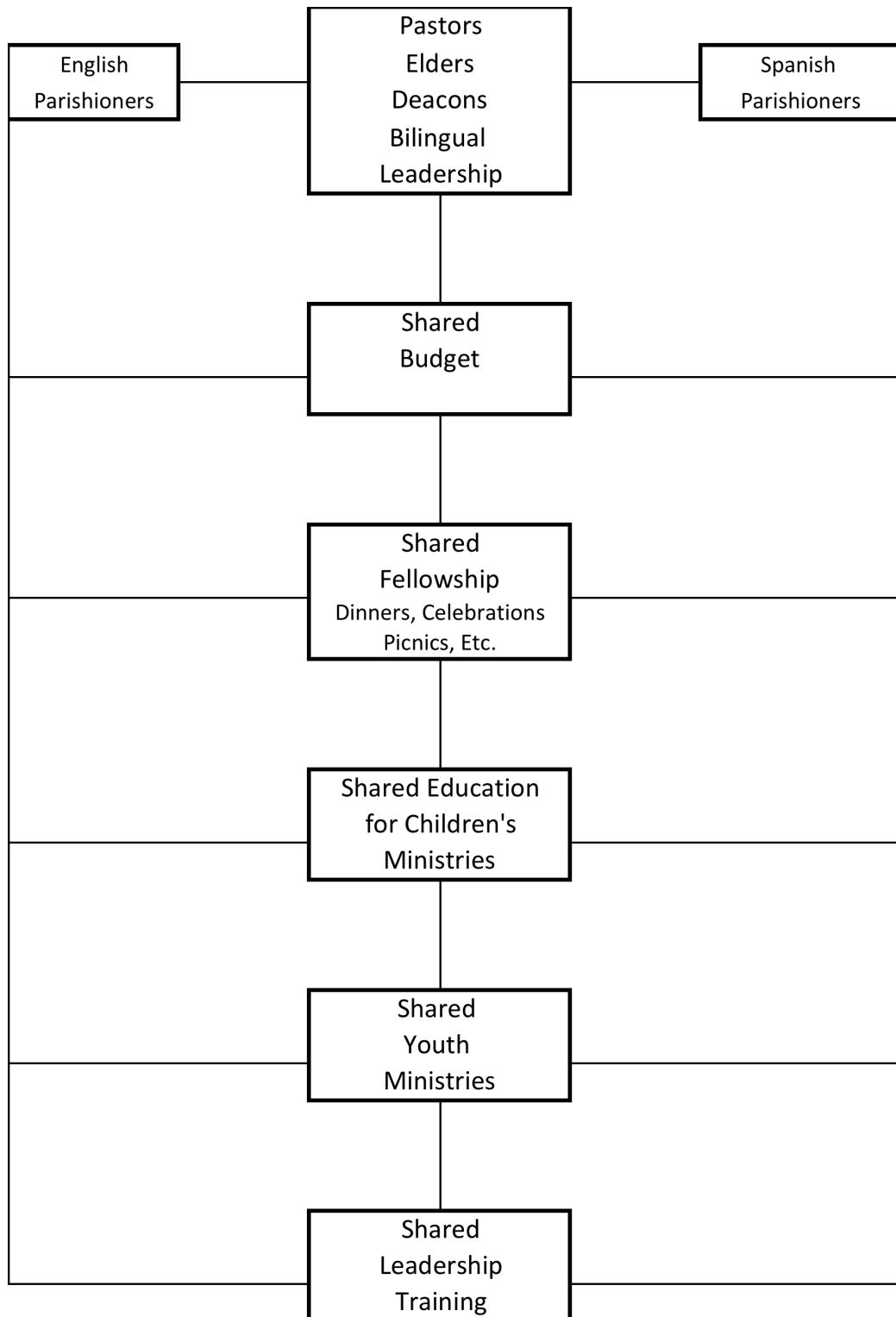
Once fully convinced of the biblical foundations and the many practical reasons for starting a multicultural ministry, it is vital that we carefully select and implement a church model that will meet the needs of those we wish to retain, as well as fulfill the church's mission in the world. For the purposes of this paper the following diagram focuses on a model that I am implementing at my current church to address the needs of this group. I have been pastoring the Ark of Salvation Church for the past 18 years and have personally seen the challenges pastors face today in retaining their second and third generations Latinos. Our church, which was founded in 1978, is currently going through the transition of a monolingual Hispanic ministry to a bilingual Multicultural ministry. I believe this model can potentially meet the needs of Hispanics from every generation because it provides pastors and church boards the framework for an effective bilingual multicultural ministry, while serving the continuing influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants, as well as meeting the needs of later generations. The following diagrams present a two-phase approach to structure a multicultural ministry that is transitioning from a traditional Hispanic congregation to a more holistic multicultural ministry. The first diagram presents the first phase that I have implemented at my local church that is extremely effective in beginning the process to reach and/or retain every generation within Hispanic congregations. The development of this two-phase approach has evolved through trial and error, as well as through several discussions with other pastors who were experiencing the same problem in their church and decided to move to a more multicultural model of ministry. It provides a structure that allows for each of the needs to be met of both Spanish and English speaking Latinos within one local church.

## Phase-One



The first phase reflects the first step to shift from a monolingual ministry to a bilingual ministry. In this phase the pastor and elders oversee the entire church. They provide the spiritual guidance of every ministry offered by the church. The Senior Pastor provides the preaching and teaching with some form of translation (through an in-ear device or a word-for-word translator) that assists to communicate God's word as well as any announcements that need to be made. At times many find a word-for-word translation a distraction and for this reason many prefer an in-ear device that allows the person to hear the sermon in their language of choice. The worship is the first part of the service that introduces the congregation to singing in two languages intermittently. The worship team is made up of English and Spanish speaking members. Songs are selected and displayed or projected in both languages as well. Children's ministries and Youth ministries are offered mainly in English because they represent the third and even fourth generations, but they are also offered in Spanish because most Hispanic churches also have first generation Hispanics who have just migrated to the U.S. Adult ministries and bible studies are offered in both languages as well. This first phase does represent some challenges because adjusting to a service with two languages will require lots of patience as each group learns to embrace each other's culture. This transition may be difficult as first and may take several years to prepare the church for the next phase of implementation. In this first phase this bilingual focus provides the opportunity to experience more fully the diversity of God by sharing the rich traditions of other cultures and languages.

## Phase Two



In this second phase the pastor and elders (all of whom should be or are bilingual) oversee the entire church, irrespective of language. They provide the spiritual guidance of every ministry offered by the church. They are responsible for ensuring the church's commitment to the vision and mission of the church. If the Senior Pastor is bilingual he can provide the preaching and teaching for both congregations. However, if the Senior Pastor isn't bilingual he should assign one of the Elders to head the preaching and teaching ministries of the English-speaking or Spanish-speaking congregation. I know of one congregation in the downtown region of Manhattan, The Primitive Church pastored by Rev. Dr. Marcos Rivera who implemented a multicultural model of ministry. Primitive originally started as a Spanish-speaking congregation and transitioned to a multicultural ministry in which the Senior Pastor, who is bilingual, decided to shift the focus of his ministry to the English-speaking parishioners and delegated the ministry of the Spanish-speaking parishioners to one of his Elders.

The church functions financially from one budget, to which both the Spanish and English parishioners contribute. There is one administrative office responsible for all the business functions of the ministry. The finances are handled by an administrative team that processes the finances simultaneously.

However, the core ministries of each language group (Worship, Adult Bible, Bible Study and Outreach) are conducted separately, according to language preference. Each language group seeks to befriend, win, and disciple those persons that are closest to their own language and culture. Some, due to God's calling and giftedness, will minister across language and culture lines.

This model provides for the dynamic cultural evolution and absorbs all the generations. Youth of the first generation migrate to English or remain in Spanish, as they may desire. The fully bilingual pastor can lead and cast vision by preaching in both English and Spanish services. However, the pastor should delegate most other leadership positions on both sides. This is one of many models that can be implemented based on the human resources available within the congregation.

In conclusion, it's important to note that the implementation of this bilingual model of multicultural ministry was embraced by our entire leadership team because we realized that ignoring the linguistic needs of our congregation was irresponsible and unwise. We concluded that an effective multicultural ministry is one that enables our congregation to retain second and third generation Hispanics. The implementation of this model requires the presence of a skilled leader who understands the socio-cultural realities in ministry today, who is willing to share responsibilities of the pastorate with other qualified leaders, and who possesses a positive image of self in terms of ethnic identity. The models presented provide the basic framework for the transition from a monolingual Hispanic ministry to a bilingual Multicultural ministry.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS**

After having identified the problem, reflecting upon the Scriptures as a source of wisdom to address the problem, analyzing why the problem exists, and implementing our pastoral solution, we now arrive at how specifically we are to determine if what we have implemented actually works. In my years of ministry experience I've learned that ministry is not just about growth but more importantly about health. Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Church in California, wrote a book titled "*The Purpose Driven Church*". In a May 2005 survey of American pastors and ministers conducted by George Barna<sup>1</sup> "*The Purpose Driven Church*" was voted as the second book most influential on their lives and ministries. In his book he establishes that a "Great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will make a Great Church". He bases this statement primarily on two great declarations in Scripture. The first is found in Matthew 22:36-40, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." The second is found in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Warren tells us that these passages contain

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<sup>1</sup> Barna Research Group, *Authors that have most influenced pastors*, Research release in Leaders & Pastors, May 20, 2005.

five divine purposes that help determine the health of any church. As we implement these kingdom principles we discover the insight we need to build a church God's way.

### **Healthy Church Evaluation Model**

As we consider Jesus' teaching of the Great Commandment, a healthy church is one that is committed to growing stronger through Worship. Ultimately, the church exists to worship God. As a church we must remember that our commitment to Christ is priority number one. Are we growing closer in relationship to God? Does the implementation of a model of Multicultural ministry provide an opportunity for the church to enjoy expressing our love to God? Absolutely, Multicultural ministry provides the church an opportunity to worship God with diversity. A multicultural worship service is a combination of different languages, features, symbols, and cultural distinctives. One chief characteristic of multicultural worship is variety of music, format, participants, style, visuals, and languages. Variety is unavoidable, for there must be a mixture and a proper blending of these qualities in a worship experience that seeks to serve people who come from various countries and cultural backgrounds. This is one positive way of embodying the gospel. Since worship is a vital part of a congregation's life, making the worship experience as multicultural as possible is not only right, it provides an opportunity to live out who we are called to be as God's people, and gives us a glimpse of what the book of Revelation reveals about worship in heaven, a beautifully vibrant, and ethnically-diverse army of saints worshipping the Almighty.

Second, Warren tells us that a healthy church is committed to growing broader through Ministry. The gospel teaches us to "love our neighbor as we love ourselves."

The church exists to minister to people. Warren states, “Ministry is demonstrating God’s love to others by meeting their needs and healing their hurts in the name of Jesus. Each time you reach out in love to others you are ministering to them.”<sup>2</sup> The church is to minister to all kinds of needs and all kinds of people. Does the implementation of a model of Multicultural ministry provide an opportunity for the church to broaden their ministry? Absolutely, Multicultural ministry provides an opportunity to serve the entire community and create a culture that is inclusive. Inclusivity means embracing diversity and joining in respectful dialogue even despite our differences. It means making space for people who are unlike ourselves, building genuine relationships with the outcast, encountering the vulnerable, and joining with these same people towards a common end of goodwill. By building an inclusive community, we can cultivate an environment that protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres to build an environment on love. Multicultural ministry provides pastoral care for everyone regardless of his or her language and culture.

Third, a healthy church is committed to growing larger through Evangelism. The church exists to communicate God’s love through his word. We are ambassadors for Christ and as such our mission is to evangelize the world. Does the implementation of a model of Multicultural ministry encourage and inspire us to reach our community? The Great Commission calls for us to go, simply put, are we going? We are to reach across ethnicities and make disciples. Warren states, “It is every Christian’s responsibility to share the Good News wherever we go. We are to tell the whole world of Christ’s coming, his death on the cross, his resurrection, and his promise to return. Someday each

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<sup>2</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), 206.

of us will give an account to God regarding how seriously we took this responsibility.”<sup>3</sup>

We must remember that we are not simply ambassadors to people within our own cultures. We are multicultural ambassadors. In today’s America, the world is at our doorsteps. The Great Commission asks that we do more than share Jesus on mission trips across the ocean. It directs us to connect cross-culturally with those who live across the street.

Fourth, a healthy church is committed to growing deeper through Discipleship. The church exists to edify and educate God’s people. Does the implementation of a model of Multicultural ministry fulfill our mission to make disciples for Christ? Absolutely, Multicultural ministry provides an opportunity for the Church to become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This is the process of discipleship, which is the Church’s responsibility to develop and people to spiritual maturity. This process begins when a person converts to Christianity and continues to grow throughout the rest of his life. The Apostle Paul states, in Colossians 1:28, “We continue to preach Christ to each person, using all wisdom to warn and to teach everyone, in order to bring each one into God’s presence as a mature person in Christ.” And again he writes to the church in Ephesus, “... so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>4</sup> The call is not only to reach people, but also to teach them. Multicultural ministry provides an opportunity for the church to grow deeper by sharing Christ’s message of love to all the nations.

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<sup>3</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 207.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 4:12-13.

Finally, a healthy church is committed to growing warmer through Fellowship. Warren tells us that the ordinance of baptism symbolizes one of the purposes of the church, which is having fellowship with one another. The church exists to provide fellowship for believers. Warren writes, “As Christians we’re called to belong, not just to believe. We are not meant to live lone-ranger lives; instead, we are to belong to Christ’s family and be members of his body.”<sup>5</sup> Baptism is not only a symbol of salvation; it is a symbol of fellowship. Does the implementation of a model for Multicultural ministry provide an opportunity to grow harmoniously as the body of Christ? Absolutely, Multicultural ministry sends an inclusive message to everyone that they are welcome into the fellowship of the family of God. The message of multiculturalism is in line with what the Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 2:19, “So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”

These principles provide the basis for an evaluation of the effectiveness and progress of the implementation of the model of Multicultural ministry that I propose. Congregational support is necessary for any ministry to succeed. In addition, we must examine whether or not we possess sufficient human and financial resources necessary for realizing this ministry strategy, as well as establish a timetable for meeting the objectives of the pastoral plan.

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<sup>5</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 209-210.

## **Final Reflection**

As the second, third and even fourth generation of Latinos continue to assimilate in the U.S. the Hispanic Protestant church will continue to see an exodus of its members to Anglo Protestant churches. However, because of their ability to connect with most races in America, it is extremely important that Hispanic Protestants become more flexible with the ministry they offer and trust that this will not weaken its culture and heritage but in fact strengthen it.

The fact remains; new generations of Hispanics grow up speaking English and become more Americanized than their parents. The children grow up wanting better facilities and specialized programs in English like they find at Anglo congregations. Many of them want the contemporary worship services they see in Anglo churches, not the Hispanic-influenced traditional services common to congregations of immigrants. These new generations are more likely to be economically mobile and represent a potential source of income. When they leave, they also take their gifts and talents, leaving Hispanic congregations largely as they found them.

However, there are some risks involved as we consider a shift to multicultural ministry. Some ministers feel that having separate services to accommodate two languages can divide a congregation. This approach also can separate families as adults go to the Spanish services while their children go to the English worship. But the coming together because of common interest and cultures is nothing that should alarm Hispanic ministers. The youth typically sit with their friends and not with their parents during any service. With the willingness to transition to a more bilingual approach to ministry comes the need of flexibility on behalf of the minister. We must all keep in mind that in

an effort to be more inclusive we make our ministries more accessible to other cultures, including that of Anglos.

Ultimately the issue is one of fear. The fear of assimilation and loss of Hispanic culture and identity. But as Justo L. Gonzalez writes in his book *“Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective”*:

And yet the fact that Hispanic Americans have been here so long and have kept their identity makes it doubtful that they will follow the same process of assimilation by which other nationalities or races have joined the mainstream of American society. If Hispanic Americans did not lose their identity when they believed in the melting pot view of American society, it is highly unlikely that they will lose it now. Although there are a few Hispanic Americans, mostly among the most recent arrivals who still believe that assimilation is possible and desirable, the majority including the children of many who thought they had been assimilated are going back to their historic roots and affirming their distinctiveness, not as something of which to be ashamed or to hide from view but as something of which to be proud and to exhibit at every possible opportunity.<sup>6</sup>

Younger generations of Hispanic Americans, encouraged by the example of African Americans and other minorities, are turning to their roots. Because of this, many insist on college courses taught in Spanish. They are demanding bilingual public education, not a remedial program for those who do not know English, but as a means of highlighting the values and advantages of biculturalism. This emphasis must be one that must be encouraged throughout our Hispanic Protestant congregations. There must be a renewed emphasis in Hispanic culture theologically if we are to reverse the exodus we are experiencing. This process of cultural awakening must be seen as a positive development.

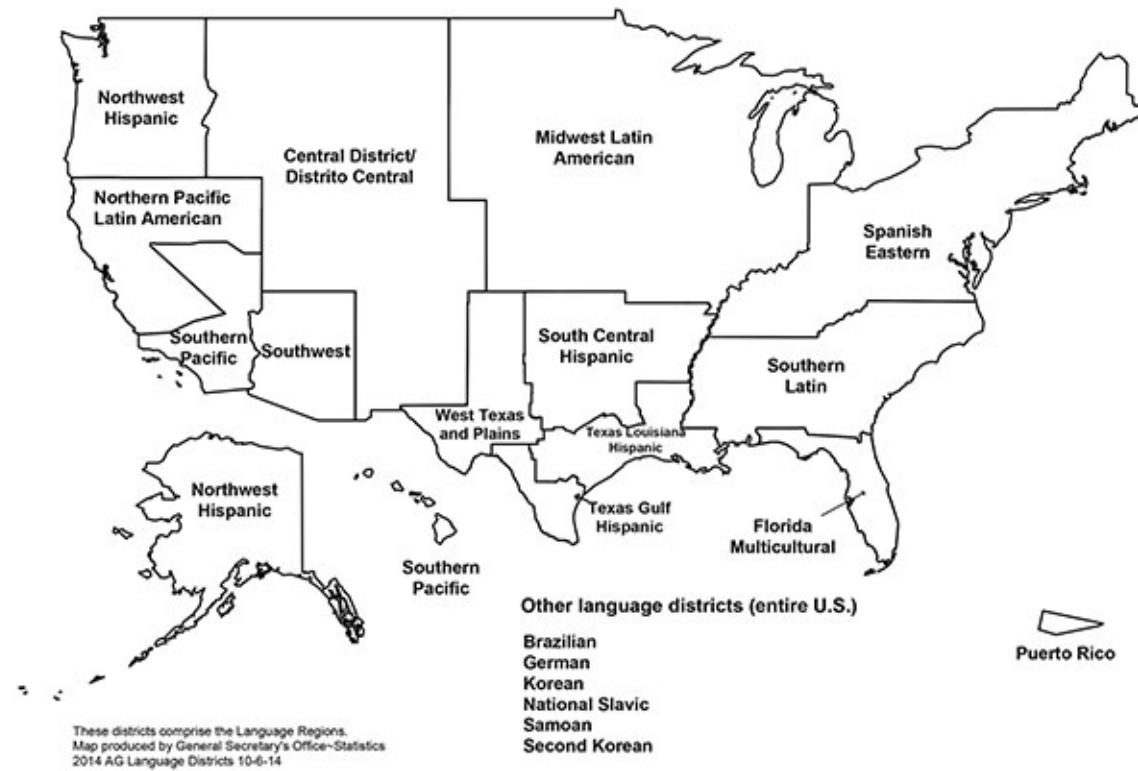
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<sup>6</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1990), 33.

## APPENDIX I

### ASSEMBLIES OF GOD LANGUAGE DISTRICTS

#### 2014 Assemblies of God *Language Districts*



## **APPENDIX II**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is designed to gather information about a trend that some have observed within Hispanic ministries whereby 2nd and 3rd generation Hispanics will choose to leave the Hispanic church in favor of an English-speaking ministry. I would like to know your thoughts on this particular topic.

This is an anonymous survey. Please don't place your name on the questionnaire. In addition, every attempt will be made to keep your answers strictly confidential. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with responses from other participants. At no point will your responses be identified with your name or ministry.

This questionnaire should take you about 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important project. At the conclusion of the study, if you are interested in receiving a copy of the results, I will be more than happy to provide you with a summary.

By completing this questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

This study is being conducted as partial fulfillment of my Doctor of Ministry thesis at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Massachusetts. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 516-255-9131.

Rev. Dan De Jesus

**1. How long have you been serving as pastor at your current ministry?**

- 0 - 2 years
- 3 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- More than 10 years

**2. What is the total number of years you have worked, in any position, in Christian ministry?**

- 1 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- 16 - 20 years
- More than 20 years

**3. What is the extent of your Biblical training? (Check all that apply)**

- attended a Bible institute
- attended a Bible college
- Attended a theological seminary
- None of the above

**4. With regards to your church ministry, do you believe there is a problem with 2nd and 3rd generation?**

- Hispanics who leave in favor of an English-speaking church?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**5. To what degree do you believe there is a problem with 2nd and 3rd generation Hispanics who choose to leave their church in favor of an English-speaking ministry?**

- Very much of a problem
- Considerable problem
- Somewhat of a problem
- A little problem
- No problem at all

6. How many people are you aware of within your ministry who were 2nd or 3rd generation Hispanics who left for an English-speaking church?

- None
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- More than 10

7. Let's assume that some Latinos who were raised in a Latino church are now thinking about migrating to an English-speaking church. There could be a number of different reasons that could motivate them to leave. From the list below, indicate what you believe are the top three reasons as to why they want to leave.

- They (the adults) prefer a church that offers the service in English
- They want an English-speaking church for their children
- They desire better youth ministry programs for their children
- They prefer a church that has more adequate facilities
- They prefer a church that is more organized
- They prefer a church that agrees with their beliefs and practices
- They want to go to a larger church that offers more programs and ministries
- Other reason:

8. Assuming that this migration has been a problem, has your ministry discussed the problem and looked for possible solutions to slow down or stop the migration?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

9. Assuming that this migration has been a problem, has your ministry initiated a new program that addresses the problem?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10. If you responded "Yes" to the question above, please describe what your ministry has done to address congregants who are thinking about leaving for an English-speaking church.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

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